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ABSTRACT

The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) began in English primary schools at the start of the autumn term, 1998. The purpose of the strategy is to improve standards in literacy. This is the fourth report on NLS by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED). It provides a detailed account of the implementation and impact of the strategy in primary classrooms in England. During the third year of the strategy, Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) inspected a number of themes, including the teaching of literacy in reception classes and the impact of the strategy on the attainment of minority ethnic pupils. The report also discusses the impact of the NLS on the rest of the curriculum; the effect of the program on minority ethnic pupils, boys, and pupils with special education needs; leadership and management; and training and support. (PM)

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The National Literacy Strategy: The third year

An evaluation by HMI

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The National Literacy Strategy: The third year

Executive Summary

Context

The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) began in English primary schools at the start of the autumn term of 1998. The purpose of the strategy is to improve standards in literacy.

The Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) inspects the implementation and impact of the NLS, through the work of Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) and Additional Inspectors (AIs), in a nationally representative sample of 300 primary schools. The Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has established an annual testing programme to provide data on pupils' attainment and progress in English in Years 3, 4 and 5 in the 300 schools. This is the fourth report on the National Literacy Strategy published by OFSTED. It provides a detailed account of the implementation and impact of the strategy in primary classrooms in England.

During the third year of the strategy, HMI inspected a number of themes, including the teaching of literacy in reception classes and the impact of the strategy on the attainment of minority ethnic pupils. HMI also undertook the first phase of a survey on the transfer of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

Quality of teaching

The strategy continues to be the major influence on the teaching of reading and writing in English primary schools. The literacy hour is being used largely in its original form in most classrooms; teachers continue to be generally reluctant to use it flexibly. The reversing of the order of the first two elements of the hour is the most common example of flexibility.

The quality of shared reading continues to be good at both key stages. Increasingly, and particularly with older pupils, teachers use work on shared texts to create links between the teaching of reading and writing, but there is not enough emphasis in shared reading on the development of pupils' comprehension.

More schools are removing guided reading from the literacy hour to teach it at other times. However, a minority of teachers continue to be unsure what guided reading entails. It is not necessary that it should be linked to the earlier shared text; its purpose is to allow pupils to read independently, with guidance and assessment by the teacher.

The quality of the teaching of shared and guided writing, as well as sentence-level work, showed a steady improvement over the year. Shared writing is most successful when questioning is balanced with instruction, explanation and demonstration. In the best lessons, teachers were able to bring grammar alive for pupils. The *Grammar for Writing* training is beginning to have a positive impact.

The quality of teaching and learning in the independent work has not improved this year. In the one in five lessons where the independent work is unsatisfactory, it is usually because the link with the whole-class shared activity has been broken and the tasks do little to develop pupils' reading or writing skills.

The amount and quality of word-level work, particularly in the reception year and Key Stage 1, have improved. However, the coverage of phonic knowledge and skills in reception year and Year 1 is frequently still too slow. In addition, there are still too many lessons where no word-level work is taught at all. There is very little direct teaching of spelling within the literacy hour for Years 5 and 6.

The quality of the plenary session has not improved since the strategy began. There is too little understanding of its purposes: for

assessment, feedback, consolidation, evaluation and the linking of the lesson to the next literacy hour or another subject. This essential part of the lesson is not given the emphasis it requires.

Although pupils' response to the literacy hour remains positive, girls respond significantly better than boys and the differences are noticeable from the reception year onwards. Overall, girls' responses are unsatisfactory in only one lesson in twenty compared to one lesson in eight for boys.

The introduction of the literacy hour in the reception year, alongside the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage, has been well managed. The elements of the literacy hour are introduced gradually over the year and, in the vast majority of schools, it is established by the end of the summer half-term.

The strategy has raised teachers' expectations of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and has supported them in setting clearer objectives. The shared text work and phonics are particularly effective for pupils with SEN. The clear structure of the National Literacy Strategy *Framework* has been helpful in outlining what pupils need to learn next.

The strategy also provides a clear framework for raising standards for pupils from minority ethnic groups. In some schools it has strengthened their continuing efforts to raise standards; in others, it has set a challenge to improve provision. Schools with significant numbers of pupils speaking English as an additional language frequently employ a successful balance of in-class support and separate provision to enable pupils to benefit from the strategy.

A large majority of schools allocate between seven and eight hours a week to English overall, but at present few schools have any coherent rationale for the work taught outside the literacy hour. As a matter of urgency, they need to conduct an audit of how time is used to teach English, both as a subject in its own right and within other subjects in order to identify any gaps, either in the teaching of the national curriculum English programmes of study or in the application of English in the rest of the curriculum.

Standards

The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has set a national target that, by 2002, 80% of 11 year olds should reach the standard expected for their age (level 4) in the end of Key Stage 2 national curriculum tests. The strategy has had mixed success, however, in improving standards this year, leaving a challenging gap of five percentage points at Key Stage 2 to be closed if the government's target is to be achieved.

At Key Stage 2, as indicated by the test results, overall attainment in English has not improved since last year. The proportion of pupils reaching level 4 or above remains at 75%. In writing, attainment has risen by three percentage points to 58%, but in reading there has been a fall of one percentage point to 82%. Despite the improvement, attainment in writing is still too low and lags far behind attainment in reading.

At Key Stage 1, improvements in 2001 were limited to one percentage point in reading and two percentage points in writing for pupils attaining level 2 or above. Test results in spelling, however, improved by three percentage points to 75%.

There are large variations in the aggregated school results across LEAs. Nationally, 64 LEAs have shown consistent improvement in their English results at the end of Key Stage 2 each year from 1998 to 2001. The other 84 LEAs with statistically significant cohorts of pupils all showed gains in the two years 1998 to 2000, but 42 of these showed no further improvement from 2000 to 2001 and, in the other 42, results in English fell in 2001.

Leadership and management

Headteachers' leadership and management of the strategy continue to improve and are now good in more than half of schools and at least satisfactory in almost nine out of ten.

The analysis and interpretation of numerical attainment data have improved and contribute to setting clear targets. In the one school in seven where target-setting is ineffective, too little analysis is undertaken, even though statistics are available. Furthermore, some schools are still too cautious: they set unambitious targets and make conservative predictions.

Headteachers are beginning to understand better the process of curricular target-setting, but there are still too many who do not. The conferences for headteachers, held jointly by the strategy and all LEAs during the autumn term 2000, contributed towards improving this understanding. Almost all headteachers recognise the need to raise attainment in writing, particularly that of boys. However, not all establish a systematic whole-school approach to tackle this effectively.

There is very little transfer of information about English between Key Stages 2 and 3 and the exchange of teachers across the two key stages is rare. Primary school headteachers and Year 6 teachers have little knowledge of what pupils might encounter in English in Year 7. If standards at Key Stage 3 are to improve, secondary schools need to take careful account of the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 as a matter of urgency and build on the improvements in standards achieved by primary schools.

In a number of schools, some headteachers face considerable problems, including a high turnover of staff, high levels of teachers' absence, a shortage of good supply teachers, too many short-term contracts and serious recruitment difficulties. These make continued, successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy a greater challenge for these schools than for others.

Conclusion

Until 2001, standards were rising steadily at the end of Key Stage 2, a reflection of schools' radical change of approach to literacy. The standstill in the improvements in the overall Key Stage 2 test results this year prompts reflection on what has been achieved so far and analysis of what still needs to be done.

The improvement in the standards of writing at the end of Key Stage 2 reflects the sharper focus on the teaching of writing this year, as well as the effects of training. The fall in the standards of reading, however, albeit slight, is something of a surprise. It may be that teachers' increased emphasis on teaching writing, combined with the analysis of texts to support it, has drawn attention away from the importance of teaching reading comprehension skills such as inference and deduction.

The priority schools have given, rightly, to English and mathematics in the primary curriculum, has resulted in improvements in standards that outweigh any of the adverse effects, such as the pressure on other subjects, at least in the medium term. In the longer term, however, these gains will need to be considered in the context of the primary curriculum as a whole.

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Introduction and Evidence Base

1 The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) began in English primary schools at the start of the autumn term 1998. The purpose of the strategy is to bring about 'a dramatic improvement in literacy standards', so that, by 2002, 80% of 11 year olds should reach the standard expected for their age in English (that is, level 4) in the end of Key Stage 2 national curriculum tests.

2 Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI) inspect the implementation and impact of the National Literacy Strategy in a nationally representative sample of 300 primary schools, observing the teaching of literacy and interviewing key personnel, such as the headteacher and the literacy co-ordinator. Most of these schools have been visited on at least four occasions since 1998 when the strategy was introduced. HMI inspect training courses and regularly meet National Literacy Strategy personnel such as literacy consultants, their line managers in local education authorities (LEAs), and the regional directors of the strategy. Evidence from section 10 inspections is also taken into account.

3 During the third year, HMI inspected a number of themes in the sample schools and others. The themes included the teaching of literacy in reception classes and the impact of the strategy on the attainment of pupils from minority ethnic groups. HMI also undertook the first phase of a survey on the transfer of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

4 In addition to the inspections, the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) has established an annual testing programme to provide data on pupils' attainment and progress in English in Years 3, 4 and 5. These data, collected and analysed by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER), augment those already available through the national curriculum tests of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils. An annex to this report, produced by the QCA, summarises the results of the English tests taken by the pupils in Years 3, 4 and 5. A fuller version is available on the QCA website.[1]

5 This is the fourth report on the National Literacy Strategy published by OFSTED. At the end of the second year of the strategy, HMI summarised evidence from visits to every school in the national sample and, amongst other issues, reported on the need to give more emphasis to the teaching of writing. This subject is revisited in this report, together with a continuing focus on the teaching of phonics.

[1] www.qca.org.uk

Main Findings

6 The strategy continues to be the major influence on the teaching of reading and writing in English primary schools and the literacy hour is being used largely in its original form in most classrooms. The strategy has had mixed success in its impact on standards this year; however, leaving a challenging gap of five percentage points at Key Stage 2 to be closed by next year if the government's target for 2002 is to be achieved.

7 Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2, as measured by the national curriculum tests, has not improved since last year. The proportion of pupils reaching level 4 or above remains at 75%. Although national curriculum test results show a welcome improvement in pupils' writing, where attainment has risen by three percentage points to 58%, results in reading have fallen by one percentage point to 82%. While the gap between pupils' performance in reading and writing remains, there is evidence that improvements in writing are narrowing it. Nevertheless, attainment in writing is still too low and lags far behind attainment in reading.

8 At Key Stage 1, improvements in 2001 were limited to one percentage point in reading and two percentage points in writing for pupils attaining level 2 or above. The improvement of three percentage points in spelling to 75%, however, is a welcome increase. On the level 2B benchmark, there was an improvement in reading of one percentage point to 69%, with boys making a slightly greater gain than girls; and in writing of three percentage points, to 59%. As at Key Stage 2, the improvement in writing is encouraging. Nevertheless, as indicated by the test results, almost one third of pupils still transfer to Key Stage 2 with reading skills below level 2B; in writing, more than four in ten pupils transfer with attainment below this level.

9 Boys continue to do less well than girls at both key stages. The gap between boys and girls at the age of eleven reported in 2000 has widened this year by one percentage point at level 4. The attainment of girls in English is ten percentage points ahead of that of boys at the end of the key stage. The gap is also marked at the age of seven. It is particularly wide in writing: girls outperform boys in writing by eight percentage points at level 2, and by 15 percentage points at level 2B.

10 There are large variations in the aggregated school results across LEAs. Nationally, 64 LEAs have shown consistent improvement in their English results at the end of Key Stage 2 each year from 1998 to 2001. The other 84 LEAs with statistically significant cohorts of pupils all showed gains in the two years 1998 to 2000, but 42 of these showed no further improvement from 2000 to 2001 and, in the other 42, results in English fell in 2001.

11 Girls' response to the literacy hour is significantly better than that of boys. Their response was unsatisfactory in only one lesson in twenty compared to one lesson in eight for boys. The differences are noticeable from the reception year onwards and need to be considered in any discussion of the underachievement of boys in English.

12 The quality of the teaching of writing showed a steady improvement over the year. The proportion of good shared writing increased from just over half the lessons in the autumn term to nearly three quarters in the summer term. The *Grammar for Writing* training undertaken by teachers in Years 5 and 6 is beginning to have a positive impact.

13 There has been no overall improvement over the last three years in the quality of teaching and learning in independent work in the literacy hour. The proportion of lessons in which the work was unsatisfactory has increased from one in six last year to one in five this year, although the independent work showed improvement over the year, suggesting that teachers make insufficient use of

assessment information in the autumn term. The 20 minutes a day given to independent work amounts to a substantial share of curriculum time. It is worrying that so many pupils spend this time unproductively. The quality of plenary sessions has also shown no improvement since the strategy began.

14 There is an improvement in the amount and quality of word-level work being taught and an increasing recognition of the importance of teaching phonics, particularly in the reception year and Key Stage 1. Nevertheless, there are still too many lessons where no word-level work takes place. In view of the crucial place of phonics teaching in word-level work, this is an important finding. Even where phonic knowledge and skills are being taught, the speed at which they are taught is frequently still too slow.

15 Increasingly, schools report difficulties in sustaining a balanced curriculum. Headteachers in a sample of 50 primary schools reported that, although the overall breadth of subject coverage in the curriculum is not generally threatened, it often lacks sufficient depth. Much of the work in the non-core foundation subjects, such as the development of enquiry skills in history and geography and the refining of technical skills in the practical subjects, is being neglected. The absence of these important elements in some subjects represents a narrowing of the curriculum.

16 Almost all schools teach English beyond the daily literacy hour in order to teach the national curriculum fully. The overall time spent on English is often not mapped in any coherent way, however, so that the additional time beyond the literacy hour is not seen as an integral part of the provision and there is rarely a clear overview of the time being given to the subject as a whole.

17 The National Literacy Strategy *Framework* has raised teachers' expectations of pupils with special educational needs and has supported teachers in setting clearer objectives. Support staff, usually teaching assistants, are generally effective in their work with pupils, including those with special educational needs.

18 The effectiveness of the headteacher continues to be a major factor in implementing the strategy and improving teaching and learning. The headteacher's leadership and management of the strategy are good in more than half of schools and at least satisfactory in almost nine out of ten. Literacy co-ordinators exert a positive influence on the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy.

19 In a number of schools, which tend to be concentrated in and around large cities, headteachers face considerable obstacles that make continued successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy a greater challenge than for schools elsewhere. A high turnover of staff, high levels of teachers' absence, a shortage of good supply teachers, too many short-term contracts and serious recruitment difficulties make it much more difficult for these headteachers to ensure good teaching and high standards.

20 There is very little transfer of information about English between Key Stages 2 and 3. The exchange of teachers across the two key stages is rare, usually amounting only to a visit by the teachers in a secondary English department to observe teaching in a Year 6 class. Primary school headteachers and Year 6 teachers have little knowledge of what pupils might encounter in English in Year 7. Even in the LEAs where there were pilots for the Key Stage 3 strategy, the primary headteachers knew very little about it. This has significant implications for the continuity of pupils' learning and the expectations of secondary schools as Year 6 pupils transfer to Key Stage 3.

21 The regional directors and literacy consultants continue to play an effective role in implementing the strategy and in providing strong support and advice for LEAs and schools. Communication between the regional directors and the LEA literacy consultants is good.

Points for Action

22 In order to sustain the improvements achieved so far and to make further progress on standards, those with national responsibility for the management of the strategy should:

- *concentrate on support for those LEAs where standards are lowest*
- *provide guidance to schools about the ways in which the literacy hour can be developed, including dissemination of approaches which are proving successful, as well as guidance on how to use time outside the literacy hour to teach reading and writing.*

23 Those with responsibility for the strategy at LEA level should:

- *continue to provide support for schools where the leadership and management of the strategy are weakest*
- *support primary and secondary schools in ensuring the successful transition of pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 so that information about pupils' standards and curricular targets in English is used effectively in Year 7*
- *continue to make training to teach phonics available to schools and encourage teachers working in Key Stage 1 and the reception year to attend this.*

24 To build on the progress made so far, schools should:

- *ensure that sufficient attention is given to the teaching of both reading and writing and that time allocated to reading outside the literacy hour takes full account of the objectives of the National Literacy Strategy Framework and the national curriculum programmes of study for reading*
- *monitor closely the attainment and response of boys at both key stages and in the foundation stage, and use the information to adjust teaching and set clear targets for the improvement of their attainment in English*
- *ensure that phonics is taught systematically throughout the reception year and Key Stage 1*
- *improve the quality of independent work in the literacy hour by linking the work for all pupils more closely to the earlier whole-class work on shared texts*
- *audit and evaluate the overall provision made for the teaching of English to ensure that there is planned, balanced coverage of the national curriculum programmes of study and the detail of the National Literacy Strategy Framework for teaching.*

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Standards of Achievement and Pupils' Progress

25 Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2, as measured by the national curriculum test results, has not improved since last year. Although there have been welcome improvements in writing, test results show a fall of one percentage point in reading. The concerns highlighted in last year's report remain: first, despite the improvements, attainment in writing is still too low and lags far behind attainment in reading; and, second, boys continue to do less well than girls at both key stages. There is evidence, however, from the special tests commissioned by the QCA for the 300 schools in the national sample that improvements in writing are narrowing the gap between pupils' performance in reading and writing.

26 The proportion of pupils reaching level 4 or above in English at the end of Key Stage 2 did not rise at all in the national curriculum Year 6 tests taken in the summer of 2001, remaining at 75%. This represents a significant threat to the achievement of the government's target of 80% in 2002.

27 The greatest improvements at level 4 and above in 2001 have been in writing, in which attainment rose by three percentage points. However, the results for reading show a decrease of one percentage point in 2001, from 83 to 82%.

28 In addition, the gap between boys and girls at the age of 11 reported in 2000 has widened this year by one percentage point. The attainment of girls in English is 10 percentage points ahead of that of boys at the end of Key Stage 2. There are no signs of any significant narrowing of the gap since 1999. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls has widened to seven percentage points in reading in 2001, but has remained at 15 percentage points in writing for the second year in succession. This is despite schools' greater concentration on the teaching of writing from 1999 to 2001 and the increased attention given in in-service training on how to teach writing. Last year's report observed that further gains were likely to become progressively more difficult to achieve without substantial improvement in writing, particularly that of boys. Although there has been an improvement of two percentage points in the attainment of both boys and girls in writing, there are no indications that the gap between their relative performance is closing.

29 There has been no change since last year in the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 in English, which remains at 29%. Although there has been an increase of one percentage point in writing at level 5, there has been none in reading. The significant improvements in the proportion of pupils achieving level 5 in the first two years of the strategy are not evident this year. The gap between boys and girls at level 4 is also reflected at level 5. Girls continue to outperform boys in English at this level and the gap between them has widened from 11 percentage points in 2000, to 13 percentage points in 2001. The gap at level 5 has also widened in reading by two percentage points to 11 percentage points, but remains at 8 percentage points in writing.

30 Figures 1, 2 and 3 illustrate the progress made in English at Key Stage 2 over the past four years.

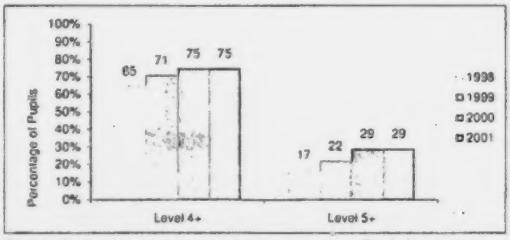

Figure 1: Attainment in national curriculum English tests at Key Stage 2: all pupils

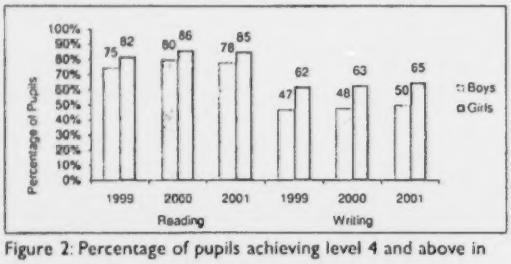

Figure 2: Percentage of pupils achieving level 4 and above in reading and writing tests at Key Stage 2: boys and girls

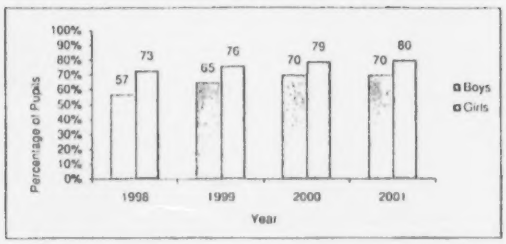

Figure 3: Percentage of pupils achieving level 4 and above in English tests at Key Stage 2: boys and girls

31 At Key Stage 1, improvements were limited in 2001 to one percentage point in reading and two percentage points in writing for those pupils attaining level 2 or above. The improvement of three percentage points in spelling to 75% is a welcome increase. On the level 2B benchmark, there was an improvement in reading in 2001 of just one percentage point to 69%, with boys making a slightly greater gain than girls; and in writing of three percentage points, to 59%. The improvement in writing is encouraging. These results indicate that almost one third of pupils still transfer to Key Stage 2 with reading skills below level 2B; in writing, more than four in ten pupils transfer with attainment below this level.

32 There has been very little change in 2001 in the proportion of pupils reaching level 3 or above in reading or writing at Key Stage 1. There was an improvement of only one percentage point in reading at level 3 (to 29%) and no change in writing. The proportion of pupils reaching level 3 in writing remains at 9%.

33 The gap in attainment is also significant at Key Stage 1. It is particularly wide for writing: girls outperform boys in writing by eight percentage points at level 2 and above, and by 15 percentage points at level 2B and above. The gap between the attainment of boys and girls at level 2 in writing has narrowed by one percentage point this year, but there has been no change at level 2B and above. This remains a cause for concern.

34 The overall improvements in reading and writing at Key Stage 1 since the strategy began in September 1998 are encouraging. The proportion of pupils achieving level 2B+ in reading has increased from 62% to 69%; in writing, the increase has been from 48% to 59%. Furthermore, almost three quarters of pupils who achieved only level 2C in English at Key Stage 1 in 1997 went on to achieve level 4 in 2001. This has important implications for target-setting and for teachers' expectations of pupils' progress in Key Stage 2.

35 Figures 4, 5, 6 and 7 illustrate the progress made in English at Key Stage 1 over the past four years.

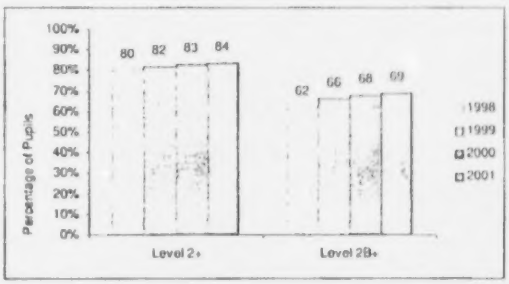

Figure 4: Attainment in national curriculum reading tests at Key Stage 1: all pupils

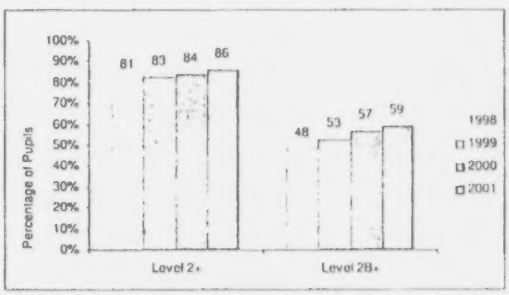

Figure 5: Attainment in national curriculum writing tests at Key Stage 1: all pupils

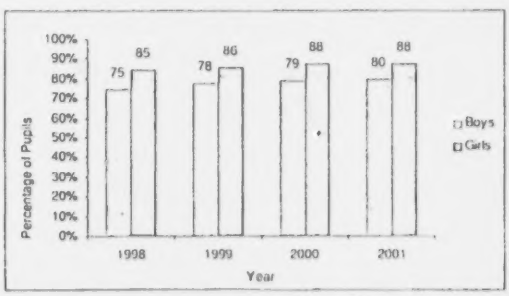

Figure 6: Percentage of pupils achieving level 2 and above in reading tests at Key Stage 1: boys and girls

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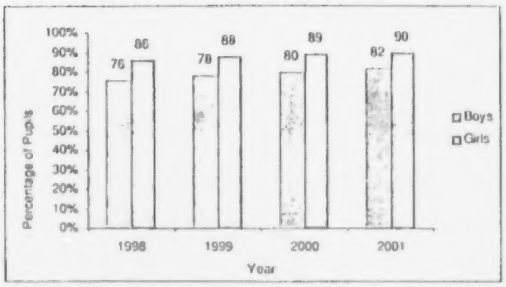

Figure 7: Percentage of pupils achieving level 2 and above in writing tests at Key Stage 1: boys and girls

36 The analysis by NFER of the specially commissioned tests for the schools in the national sample shows improvements across all ability ranges in reading, writing and spelling. In Years 3, 4 and 5 there has been a reduction in the numbers of pupils failing to reach the lowest level measured by the tests. By Year 5, 47% of pupils had already reached level 4 in reading, and 13% in writing, improvements of one percentage point and 5 percentage points respectively on the previous year. Over 95% of the pupils who achieved level 3 in the Year 5 reading test in 2000 achieved level 4 or better in this year's national tests. For writing the equivalent figure was 78%.

37 It has been possible to track pupils in the sample schools as they move through Key Stage 2, since the tests measure the progress of the same pupils from year to year. For pupils in Years 4 and Year 5, the average age-standardised score was significantly higher in 2001 than in 2000. In other words, although they were a year older, these pupils had made more than one year's worth of progress. These results are encouraging and indicate improving standards across Key Stage 2 prior to Year 6 when the national tests are taken. Many pupils make substantial progress, particularly during Year 6, and both boys and girls are obtaining better scores in 2001 than in 1999. However, there is no real evidence that the gap in achievement between girls and boys is closing.

38 When comparing national curriculum levels achieved in reading and writing in each of the three year groups tested, it is obvious that pupils' performance in reading is much better than their performance in writing. For example, in 1999 78% of pupils in Year 5 achieved level 3 or better in reading but only 59% achieved level 3 or better in writing. By 2001, there had been an increase of three percentage points in the proportion of pupils achieving level 3 or better in reading, and the corresponding increase for writing was 13 percentage points. While the gap between performance in reading and writing remains, there is evidence that improvements in writing are closing it.

39 There are large variations in the aggregated school results across LEAs. Nationally, 64 LEAs have shown consistent improvement in their English results at the end of Key Stage 2 each year from 1998 to 2001. The other 84 LEAs with statistically significant cohorts of pupils all showed gains in the two years 1998 to 2000, but 42 of these showed no further improvement from 2000 to 2001 and, in the other 42, results in English fell in 2001.

Quality of the Teaching of Literacy

Introduction

40 Teachers generally continue to be reluctant to reorder the elements of the literacy hour in order to teach some objectives more effectively. As reported in the evaluation of the second year of the strategy, the reversing of the order of the first two elements of the hour is the most common example of this flexibility. Very often, where writing has been the focus of the lesson, teachers have started with word-level work in order to link the shared writing more closely with the subsequent guided and independent activities. Teachers have also drawn together the first two parts of the literacy hour, using sentence-level work within, rather than separate from, the teaching of shared writing. Some schools monitor carefully the introduction of such modifications to ensure that there is no compromise in the teaching of key elements such as word and sentence-level work. This is good practice.

Teaching of reading

41 **Shared reading,** which has been successful from the start of the strategy, continues to be effective, particularly in the contribution it makes to the teaching of writing. Teachers are confident in their understanding of the subject matter to be covered and, increasingly, are using work on shared texts to create links between reading and writing. The quality of shared reading continues to be good. After a shaky start in the autumn term, when only half the lessons were good, there were significant improvements during the year. By the summer term, seven out of ten lessons were good and the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching had fallen to less than one in fourteen lessons.

42 With pupils at Key Stage 1, shared reading is used to teach the conventions of print and careful repetition of simple phrases assists those who are just beginning to read fluently. There has been a gradual move away from using shared reading as the only means of teaching phonics. Teachers now often use shared reading effectively with younger pupils to enable them to apply their phonic knowledge in blending sounds to read words, and are giving more emphasis to teaching phonics explicitly in the word-level part of the literacy hour.

43 Shared reading with older pupils is often used as an introduction to writing through the discussion of an author's style, the characteristics of a genre or the devices and language authors use to achieve specific effects.

> **In a Year 6 lesson on journalistic style, the teacher used well-chosen examples to draw from the pupils their ideas about how the journalist had chosen certain words and used a narrow range of sentence types and grammatical features to write a sensational account. From this preliminary study of the shared text, she was able to demonstrate ways in which language can be used to manipulate ideas and create a particular version of events. This work led effortlessly into shared writing incorporating similar characteristics and, later, to linked independent and guided writing.**

44 Shared reading is used less often as a way of developing pupils' comprehension. It was done well in a Year 5 class where 25 of the 29 pupils spoke English as an additional language.

> **The teacher used Walter de la Mare's narrative poem *The Listeners* to develop pupils' literal and inferential understanding. The pupils read the poem aloud with reasonable confidence. The teacher stopped them from time to time to consider the purpose of punctuation in their reading. She helped them to consider mood, meaning, language, and questioned the pupils well. She developed the focus of the reading from the literal events of the poem to a consideration of what might have happened in the past. She was effective in referring pupils back to the text to reconsider the evidence provided by the poem. The**

successful plenary closed with the teacher asking the question: 'Why do you think the poem is called *The Listeners* and not *The Traveller*?' The pupils were encouraged throughout the lesson to enjoy poetry.

45 In the small proportion of lessons where shared reading is less effective, there is not enough emphasis on the teaching of comprehension, for example by helping pupils to move from an understanding of literal statements towards an understanding of implied meaning. The text is read with only limited expression, which fails to engage pupils or to provide successful models of reading aloud. Often, the texts chosen are not matched sufficiently well to their needs or interests nor used successfully to provide vocabulary, ideas or structures which they might use later as models for their own writing.

46 There is an increasing tendency to move **guided reading** from the literacy hour entirely and to teach it at other times of the day. While this enables teachers to concentrate on the teaching of writing in the literacy hour, there is a risk that the direct teaching of reading might be neglected. At Key Stage 1 in particular there should be a strong focus on reading in the hour itself, not least to provide immediate opportunities for pupils to apply the word-level work taught earlier, particularly phonics.

47 The teaching of guided reading is good in about three lessons in five and unsatisfactory in under one in ten. In the best guided reading sessions, teachers ensure that pupils read texts which are matched well to their reading level and which give them opportunities to apply the reading strategies which they have been taught. For example, in a Year 1 class, the teacher used a guided reading session to support pupils who had been involved in Early Literacy Support (pilot) intervention lessons in the previous term. She introduced a story – *Where's my teddy?* – very effectively, before focusing with the pupils on strategies for working out unfamiliar words, including applying the phonic knowledge and skills they had gained from the intervention lessons.

48 A minority of teachers continue to be unsure of the nature and exact purposes of guided reading. In the unsatisfactory lessons it amounts to little more than a time to hear individual pupils read with some general questions at the end of the session. A common misunderstanding is the notion that the content of the guided reading should be linked to the shared text read earlier. The purpose of guided reading is to allow pupils to read independently, using individual copies of a text selected to match the reading level of the group, while the teacher assesses and supports each pupil.

Teaching of writing and sentence-level work

49 The teaching of **shared writing** proved difficult for many teachers in the first two years of the strategy. At the end of the second year, there were still one in five lessons where it was unsatisfactory and it was good in less than a half. By contrast, the proportion of good shared writing during the third year of the strategy increased from just over half the lessons in the autumn term to nearly three quarters in the summer term. Most of the very good lessons were in reception and Year 6 classes. The *Grammar for Writing* training undertaken by teachers in Years 5 and 6 is beginning to have a positive impact on the teaching of writing. This is reflected in the specially commissioned tests which showed that improvements in writing were better between 2000 and 2001 than between 1999 and 2000.

50 Over half the teaching of **sentence-level work** was good and there were clear signs of improvement during the year. Although the teaching of sentence-level work was unsatisfactory in nearly one in five lessons in the autumn and spring terms, this proportion had fallen to one lesson in twenty by the summer.

51 As the year progressed, teachers used the format of the literacy hour more flexibly. For example, many teachers drew together the first two parts of the literacy hour, using the sentence-level work within the teaching of shared writing to show how writers have to

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make choices about grammatical structure. This meant that the shared text provided a more sustained focus for the rest of the lesson and improved the quality of the subsequent group and independent work.

52 The best teaching of shared writing had common characteristics. The teachers had very good knowledge and understanding of language and were able to explain and demonstrate the grammatical features of the genres being studied. They were able to lead pupils from an appreciation of surface features to a deeper understanding of how language works and how successful writers use it skilfully to convey ideas, emotions and information. They challenged pupils' suggestions, accepting them only if they met the criteria of quality or appropriateness for the purpose of the writing.

53 Shared writing was most successful when the teacher balanced questioning with instruction and explanation. In a lesson with Year 4 and 5 pupils on writing a guide for new pupils to the school, the teacher used questions such as 'Do we now need to . . .?' and 'Do we need so many negatives . . .?' to remind the pupils to consider the impact of the writing on the reader. In a lesson with Year 3 pupils on story settings, the teacher skilfully encouraged the pupils to improve what had been written collaboratively by demonstrating how to use pronouns, how to avoid the repetition of certain phrases and by asking key questions such as 'What might happen next?'

54 The proportion of shared writing sessions that were unsatisfactory reduced from one in six in the autumn term to none that were unsatisfactory in the summer. Where it was unsuccessful, shared writing was undemanding, with the teacher doing too much for the pupils. In one Year 3 lesson, involving the shared writing of a guide to a local manor house, the teacher provided so much structure for the writing that the pupils were required only to supply single words to complete the text. In other unsuccessful lessons, the teachers lost sight of their objectives and allowed themselves to be side-tracked by the discussion with pupils.

55 **Guided writing** was one of the aspects that was identified as a cause for concern in the first year of the strategy, when it was unsatisfactory in a quarter of lessons. During the third year, however, the unsatisfactory teaching of guided writing fell from one lesson in four in the autumn to less than one lesson in ten in the summer. Just over half the teaching of guided writing was good. The best teaching was in Year 6 where seven out of ten lessons were good and the worst in Year 3 where the figure was only four in ten.

56 Guided writing is an important strand in the teaching of writing, acting as a bridge between shared and independent writing and providing an opportunity for the teacher to focus closely on one group of pupils.

57 Effective guided writing sessions share common characteristics:

- *the teaching invariably develops work begun in shared writing*
- *the teaching focuses on a specific aspect – for example drafting, use of connectives – with a clear aim of improving quality*
- *resources are used appropriately, including such aids as whiteboards for pupils and writing frames*
- *there is an effective range of teaching strategies, particularly questioning to extend pupils' initial responses*
- *teachers understand the characteristic features of different genres of writing*
- *pupils are encouraged to apply their knowledge of grammar and of spelling strategies.*

58 Good guided writing occurred in a Year 6 class.

> **The teacher had planned a range of well-organised tasks, linked to the earlier shared work on the differences between biography and autobiography. With a lower-ability guided writing group, he supported the pupils in rewriting a text in the first person. Through his skilful questioning, they overcame difficulties they had encountered**

in their drafts and improved their use of vocabulary. The group made good progress in understanding the features of autobiographical writing and demonstrated in their initial drafts an appropriate grasp of content and of language.

59 Where the teaching lacks focus and does not build effectively on shared writing and sentence-level work, the value of guided writing is lost. For example, a session with a group of reception pupils focused on the composition of simple sentences. It was too ambitious because there had been too little demonstration and discussion of the conventions of print in the shared writing and the pupils learnt little as a result.

Teaching of phonics and spelling

60 Since the first year of the National Literacy Strategy implementation, there has been an increasing recognition of the importance of teaching phonics and an improvement in the amount and quality of word-level work being taught, particularly in the foundation stage and Key Stage 1. Nevertheless, there are still too many lessons where no word-level work is taught at all. It is included in almost all lessons in the reception year, but by Years 1 and 2 its frequency decreases: one lesson in six contains none. Since most word-level work at Key Stage 1 should consist of the teaching of phonics, this is an important finding.[2] Even where phonic knowledge and skills are being taught, the speed at which they are taught in the reception year and Year 1 is frequently still too slow.

61 The frequency of word-level work decreases further in Years 3 and 4 where it is included in fewer than half the lessons. Not all the reduction can be attributed to the increasing demands of sentence-level work. The National Literacy Strategy *Framework* is clear that objectives for word-level work throughout Years 3 and 4 should include revision and consolidation of the phonic knowledge and skills learned at Key Stage 1, as well as new work on spelling.

62 Overall, provision for phonics, including planning, teaching and assessment, is good in two out of five schools and unsatisfactory in one in five, although this masks the uneven provision across year groups. Planning for and the teaching of phonics are best in reception classes, although the pace of coverage of phonic knowledge is still too slow in many classes. In Years 1 and 2, the teaching is not systematic enough for those pupils who are already falling behind, so that the gap begins to widen between the most and least advanced pupils. The problem is compounded in Year 3 where there is an over-reliance on Additional Literacy Support (ALS).

63 Although there has been a marked increase in the amount of word-level work at Key Stage 1 since the strategy began, too many teachers use the time for practising the reading and spelling of high-frequency words rather than for teaching phonics directly. Despite clear published guidance from the strategy, this misunderstanding undermines efforts to improve the quality of phonics teaching and, thereby, the standards of reading and writing more generally.

64 In the reception year, most teachers have a clear recognition of the need to teach phonic skills as well as knowledge of letter–sound correspondences. In a reception year class, for example, pupils were using letter fans to play 'Hear it, show it, hide it', choosing and revealing the relevant letter on the fan to match the sound they heard at the beginning or end of a word. Teachers of reception pupils make good use of opportunities to emphasise correct formation when pupils are writing.

65 In a mixed reception/Year 1 class, very good use was made of a teaching assistant to teach phonics separately to a small group of reception pupils while the teacher taught the Year 1 pupils. She used a 'phoneme frame' to support them in segmenting and representing phonemes in simple words such as those with the consonant-consonant-vowel-consonant (CCVC) spelling. In another reception/ Year 1 class, the teacher managed the whole-class teaching very successfully to meet the needs of the different age-groups. She taught letter–sound correspondences to the youngest

[2] See also *The teaching of Phonics*. A paper by HMI. Available now on www.ofsted.gov.uk

pupils, followed by two phonics games for the older ones, which moved from spelling CVC to CCVC words. The work developed pupils' vocabulary, for example, through spelling the words 'seep' and 'steep', but phonics remained the focus of this part of the lesson. The teacher's good subject knowledge enabled her to build on pupils' earlier skills and knowledge, revise previous work and ensure they all made progress.

66 Where the teaching of phonics was good, it was characterised by such features as:

- *good subject knowledge by teachers, including the ability to use the correct terminology with pupils, and the constructive use of pupils' misconceptions through the assessment of oral and written work*
- *a brisk pace to teaching*
- *rapid early coverage of letter/sound correspondences at the rate of several a week*
- *a focus on phonic skills, that is, hearing, identifying, segmenting and blending sounds, as well as on phonic knowledge, that is, letter–sound correspondences*
- *regular revision of earlier work to consolidate learning*
- *an integrated approach to phonics and spelling, that is, recognising that encoding is the reverse of decoding, but that it is also more difficult*
- *opportunities for pupils to apply their phonic knowledge and skills, especially in shared reading and writing, under the direction of the teacher*
- *a highly organised sequence of teaching, so that it is clear exactly what follows what*
- *effective use of teaching assistants: to support pupils in whole-class work; to provide separate phonics sessions for very young pupils in mixed-age classes; to provide focused phonics work in Years 3 and 4 during the literacy hour*
- *effective use of schemes of work, including published material.*

67 There is very little revision or consolidation of phonics in Year 3. Most of the teaching of phonics in Years 3 and 4 consists of Additional Literacy Support for small groups, rather than any whole-class revision of phonics from Key Stage 1 or direct teaching of phonic/spelling knowledge. In a Year 3 class, word-level work in the spring term, for example, consisted of going over the spelling lists which would be tested at the end of the week, drawing pupils' attention to vowel digraphs such as 'oo' in 'school' or 'ea' in 'tea', but not focusing on developing pupils' skills of segmenting. This lesson failed to teach the pupils how to apply their phonic knowledge to spell the words for themselves.

68 Overall, there is very little direct teaching of spelling within the literacy hour for Years 5 and 6. When word-level work takes place, there is more emphasis on the teaching of spelling conventions and rules, with some work on extending vocabulary, rather than on teaching pupils spelling strategies explicitly.

Use of independent and group work

69 Based on the analysis of lessons over the year as a whole, there has been no improvement over the last three years in the quality of teaching and learning in this part of the literacy hour. The trend has been gradually downward, with fewer lessons where the independent work is good and more lessons where it is unsatisfactory. The small decline in the amount of good independent work that was noted last year has continued: just below one half of all lessons this year had good independent work. More worryingly, the proportion of lessons with unsatisfactory independent work has increased from one in six last year to one in five this year.

70 When the independent work over the last year is analysed term by term, however, the proportion of lessons where it was unsatisfactory halved between the autumn and summer terms. The improvements were made across all the year groups, but were most marked in Years 1, 2 and 6. This pattern reflects the connection between teachers' knowledge of pupils' capabilities, which takes time to develop, and the quality of group and

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independent work which depends heavily on good classroom routines and the teachers' ability to know how much to expect of their pupils. While this improvement over the year is positive, its pattern suggests that insufficient use is made of assessment information early in the school year to enable teachers to match their expectations of pupils with what they actually know and can do.

71 In the one in five lessons where the independent work is unsatisfactory, it is usually because the link with the whole-class shared activity has been broken and the tasks chosen do little to develop pupils' reading or writing skills. The lesson plans often show that there are perfectly sound learning objectives for the independent work, but that the teachers are unable to translate these into worthwhile tasks with the right level of demand. In a Year 2 class, for example, the first half of the literacy hour had gone well. It focused on how to write instructions, using well-chosen examples and helpful demonstration by the teacher. The guided writing group made good progress, whereas the other groups, and the least able pupils in particular, spent most of their time cutting out and sticking pictures without writing anything at all. Similarly, in a Year 6 class, a very good introduction on journalistic styles of writing lost its impetus in the independent work because the pupils were asked only to do a low-level, sentence completion task. Tasks of this kind were described in the first report on the National Literacy Strategy in 1999 as 'holding activities' which occupied pupils but did not develop or consolidate their literacy skills. It is a cause for concern that such tasks remain a weakness in as many as one in five lessons two years later.

72 The use of 'holding activities' also reduces pupils' interest and motivation. In a small but significant proportion of lessons, pupils' responses to the independent work are poor and little is achieved at the end of this part of the lesson. There are several reasons for this, but the most common is the dullness of the activity itself, particularly when they involve exercises or worksheets that seem to the pupils to have little relevance or purpose. In a Year 4/5 class, for example, a group of four boys was asked to complete an exercise from a published scheme on the use of subordinate clauses. In the absence of adult intervention which could have generated some interest in the task, the boys did very little work and made no progress in their ability to identify or use subordinate clauses. Similarly, a middle-ability group in a Year 4 class had little interest in a worksheet on the use of prefixes and suffixes and had little to show for the twenty minutes of time that were spent working independently.

73 The other main reason for a poor response to independent work is the provision of tasks that are too difficult for the pupils to do by themselves. A telling example was an activity for a group of Year 5 pupils that required them to write a play script. Although the first part of the lesson had been focused on play scripts, the pupils needed much more help to get started and, by the end of the session, they had spent little time on the task and produced nothing of any value.

74 The key features of the successful independent work are much as they were described in last year's report:

- *direct links with the work done in shared reading or writing in the first part of the lesson*
- *tasks which have a common theme or starting-point, enabling the teacher to explain and demonstrate her expectations to the whole class so that pupils working independently are able to get on immediately with a clear purpose*
- *activities which interest and motivate the pupils, allow them to apply their knowledge and skills, and result in outcomes that are of value in themselves and of interest to others*
- *pupils working together in pairs where the activity lends itself to collaboration and the sharing of ideas.*

75 The teachers of these successful lessons do not try to provide four or five different activities to be rotated around various ability groups during the week. They deliberately choose independent work which provides the next

stage in a process of learning that begins earlier in the lesson or in a previous lesson, usually through shared reading or writing with the whole class. In a Year 3 class, for example:

> **The initial shared writing with the whole class focused on the characteristics of the opening paragraphs of a story and the need to capture the interest of the reader. Using shared composition, the teacher combined the pupils' ideas for an opening paragraph with her own and wrote an example on an overhead projector transparency. Particular emphasis was given to the imaginative use of adjectives to create added interest and this formed the word and sentence-level part of the lesson. The pupils then worked independently in pairs, writing the opening two paragraphs of a story which they recorded on an OHP transparency. They worked with confidence and at a good pace, having had the experience of the shared writing that enabled them to get on immediately by themselves. In the final part of the lesson, the pupils' transparencies were used well by the teacher, not as a 'show and tell' session, but to generate discussion about the strengths and weaknesses of the various opening paragraphs that had been written. Since the whole class had been doing the same activity, including those doing guided writing with the teacher, the plenary was of interest to all the pupils and the quality of the discussion was very good.**

76 The twenty minutes a day for independent work amount to a substantial share of curriculum time, more over the year than is given in most schools, for example, to any foundation subject. It is worrying that so many pupils spend this time unproductively. The arguments in favour of making the independent work a continuation of the whole-class shared work done earlier in the lesson remain persuasive. The benefits are clear, yet as many as one in five lessons continue the pattern of providing activities for the independent work which are completely different from what was done earlier. There need to be good reasons, particularly where writing is concerned, for not expecting all pupils in the class to work on a broadly similar task with which they have already become familiar through shared work with the teacher.

Use of the plenary [4]

77 The plenary continues to be one of the weakest parts of the literacy hour. It has barely improved since the strategy began. Although the proportion of unsatisfactory teaching has fallen slightly this year, one lesson in five remains weak. The teaching is good in only two in five lessons.

78 The best plenaries make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. Invariably, they are successful because the pupils have shared a common task earlier in the lesson. The teaching is highly purposeful: there are clear objectives for the lesson and these are revisited explicitly in the plenary. The teacher is determined to make a difference to pupils' learning and questioning is focused sharply on the objectives. Where pupils present their work, both the teacher and other pupils are involved in pertinent analysis and evaluation.

> **In a Year 6 lesson, the teacher made very good use of the pupils' contributions to reinforce the teaching points and to suggest ways in which the first draft of their 'time slip' writing might be improved for the final version. He extended the pupils' understanding of the importance of detail such as the choice of words, pauses and silences as well as speech and action, using their writing to illustrate the teaching points and to set new targets. This plenary focused on two key questions: 'What did we set out to learn?' and 'Did we meet our personal targets?'**

79 Successful plenaries also review the progress made and reinforce expectations. In one Year 5 lesson, the teacher made it clear that he had chosen two girls to present their work because he had seen its quality; he pointed out that none of the boys had got as far and needed to work harder to complete the work. The teacher used the two girls' writing to reinforce

editing skills and ideas about how writing could be improved.

80 Effective plenaries also motivate pupils for the next lesson through homework or questioning. In a mixed reception/Year 1 class, the plenary prepared pupils for the writing of the next part of a story the following day and finished with the teacher asking the question: 'I wonder if you can tell me tomorrow what Molly Mouse did next.'

81 Unsatisfactory plenaries miss opportunities to extend pupils' contributions when they present their work and fail to involve other pupils. When there have been too many different tasks earlier in the lesson, the majority of the pupils have not been involved in what is being discussed. This is particularly a problem at Key Stage 1. Plenaries are often too short and teachers frequently are doing no more than going through the motions of conducting one. Even where plenaries are given appropriate time, the introduction of extraneous material confuses pupils and diffuses the impact of the teaching. Sometimes the teacher has attempted to deal with too much material in the lesson, with a resulting loss of focus in the plenary. Inevitably, the unsatisfactory plenaries do not get to the heart of what the lesson has been about.

Pupils' response

82 Pupils' response to the literacy hour generally remains positive. In seven out of eight lessons, it is satisfactory or better. However, there has been a slight increase in the number of lessons in which pupils' response was unsatisfactory, from one lesson in ten to one lesson in eight. Weak teaching and unsatisfactory class management contribute significantly to poor response.

83 The response of girls is significantly better than that of boys; the differences are noticeable from the reception year onwards. Overall, girls' responses are unsatisfactory in only one lesson in twenty compared to one lesson in eight for boys. In classes where boys greatly outnumber girls, the girls' responses are subdued and the teacher's time is often monopolised by dealing with the boys.

84 Some teachers cope well when boys' behaviour and attitudes are poor. In a Year 1 class of nine boys and 14 girls, for example, the teacher took a firm line with boys. She directed questions specifically to them and alerted them to questions she was about to ask. They were reminded regularly about staying on task and given clear targets: 'I want ten words in your book by the time the big hand reaches seven'.

85 Boys' participation improves significantly when the work requires an active response from them. Younger boys responded well to phonics games and texts which involved activity, such as rolling lettered dice to make words or reading *The Enormous Watermelon* in a shared reading session. Good choices of subject matter for both narrative and non-narrative writing gain the attention of all pupils, but especially boys. A writing task for Year 4 which asked for a description of a ghostly castle appealed to boys, as did work in which pupils were asked to focus on the features of a character they had chosen themselves. Boys' choices included pirates and aliens. The writing of instructions in a Year 5 class for making a rain gauge also gained boys' attention. It built on their practical experience and linked to their work in science and geography. Because the subject matter caught their interest, they were motivated to complete the task. They understood its purpose and completed a sequence of instructions in a logical way. Working in pairs also appealed to boys, for instance in composing similes together on mini whiteboards during a shared writing session in a Year 4 class. Good classroom organisation helped to improve the behaviour of all pupils, including boys, such as having equipment prepared on work tables so there was no excuse for wandering around.

86 The response of pupils with special educational needs (SEN) varies. In general, the younger pupils enjoy the literacy hour, largely because of its clear and visual approaches, its predictable structure and the shared class activities. However, as pupils get older, they become more aware of the difference between their attainment and that of the majority of the class, with consequent difficulties for their self-esteem and motivation.

Writing and reading across the curriculum

87 The literacy skills most frequently reinforced in lessons in other subjects are the following: reading non-fiction books for information; note-taking; writing instructions; producing accounts of events or places studied and recounts of investigations or research undertaken; and persuasive writing. The quality of the teaching is at least satisfactory in almost all the lessons and is good in two thirds.

88 In a large majority of the lessons, the teachers are clear about the focus of the work and identify clear objectives both for the subject of the lesson and for literacy. For example, a Year 6 lesson had specific science objectives about the types and functions of teeth and their care; it also had clear literacy objectives about vocabulary extension, note-making and persuasive writing. In a few lessons, however, there was a confusion of purpose, as in a Year 2 history lesson on Florence Nightingale where the pupils learned only a little about conditions in Scutari and practised adding adjectives to simple sentences to make them more interesting. The lesson did not extend pupils' historical knowledge nor did it significantly develop their reading and writing skills.

89 In the best lessons, the teacher reinforces previous learning in literacy by providing opportunities for pupils to apply what has been learnt in literacy in another subject and *vice versa*.

> In a Year 5 science lesson the children had already investigated waterproofing and porosity and were given the task of writing a set of instructions for the pupils in a parallel class on how to carry out the investigation. The lesson began with the teacher emphasising the key features of instructions, which the pupils remembered well from their literacy lessons: clarity; sequence; use of bullet points; short sentences; avoiding opinions and sticking to facts. Key vocabulary had been prepared on a visual aid: evaporation, precipitation and condensation. Two writing frames had been produced for the pupils to use, one more complex than the other. In addition, the highest attaining pupils had the further task of devising instructions for a more advanced investigation. The pupils were all reminded of the principles of fair testing at this stage. When the pupils began writing, the teacher supported the least able group, as if it were a guided writing session, emphasising the need for both the content and the transcription to be accurate. There was periodic whole-class monitoring to check for misunderstandings and errors and to advise on the imperative form of verbs such as get, take, soak and put. The plenary session was successful. Individual pupils were able to show how they had completed the task, step by step. The teacher provided feedback about whether the instructions met the agreed criteria and, if not, what they had to do to improve them. This plenary session was also used for assessment: the pupils analysed their work to identify successful and unsuccessful sentences. This was a good example of how to reinforce previous learning in both science and literacy through work which required the practice and application of skills from both subjects.

90 Other subjects can promote literacy by using the pupils' reading and writing skills to enable them to acquire and record new learning.

> In a Year 4 lesson on the Victorian period, the history objective was for the pupils to find out about how people spent their holidays at the seaside. The literacy objective was to use this information to compose a postcard as though from a Victorian child. The focus was on the kinds of sentences, vocabulary and punctuation that would be appropriate. The class teacher began the lesson by reminding the pupils of the skills they had learnt for using books, including using indexes and illustrations to locate information. Through a shared text, she introduced the terms 'promenade' and 'bathing machine' and explained what they meant. This led to a lively discussion in which pupils discussed ideas about what the Victorians might have enjoyed at the seaside and asked questions

about the text. As the discussion progressed, the teacher recorded ideas and sentences on a whiteboard. The teacher made further teaching points by focusing attention on the content, readership, style and layout of the postcard. She also showed the layout of a postcard, using a prepared example on an overhead projector. The examples produced by the class were of a good standard and the teacher used the plenary to read some of the postcards and to ask 'Why do I like this?' to encourage pupils' constructive evaluation of each other's work. The lesson had been successful in teaching new knowledge about the Victorian period and about how to write a postcard.

91 In much of the work across the curriculum, there are many examples of the way in which the strategy is influencing other subjects. The structure of the literacy hour, including the notion of a plenary discussion, has been adapted for other subjects; writing frames are used increasingly to help pupils structure their writing; subject-specific big books are used for shared reading; teachers are identifying explicit learning objectives for the other subject as well as for English and are looking for ways in which literacy skills can be applied successfully.

Use of ICT to support literacy

92 The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support the teaching of literacy is increasing slowly, but continues to be rather limited overall. Schools recognise its potential, but many are not yet applying it beyond patchy and rather unsystematic use. A limited range of software for literacy, unreliable computers and networks, delays in government-funded ICT training or other school priorities can all militate against progress. Nevertheless, teachers' confidence and skills in using computers are growing so that, in a significant minority of schools, ICT contributes much more regularly and effectively to teaching literacy.

93 Access to a wider range of hardware has given many schools more opportunities to use ICT with pupils. However, many schools face difficult decisions in organising and using their newly acquired ICT resources: whether to support literacy teaching in an ICT suite or a classroom. Few literacy hours are taught in ICT suites, although specific aspects of ICT-based work in literacy such as non-fiction research and writing are more common. Classroom-based computers are used mostly during group and independent work, often with only one or two pupils either drafting and editing text or using spelling and phonics programs. Teachers make the best use of ICT when they plan its use with clear literacy objectives in mind, rather than using the equipment simply so that pupils have experience of it for its own sake. For example, Year 2 and 3 pupils edited text prepared by the teacher by inserting capital letters appropriately. Year 1 and 2 pupils used an encyclopaedia program on portable computers in their classroom to find scientific words and definitions. At Key Stage 2, a Year 5 teacher led shared reading from a screen in a computer suite, using the text to highlight key words prior to the pupils describing a character in their own words.

94 Encouragingly, there has been wider use of ICT applications for literacy teaching than in previous years, albeit in only a small minority of schools. Internet access and high quality equipment, such as interactive whiteboards and digital projectors, are helping to ensure that ICT makes a significant contribution to the teaching of literacy, particularly at Key Stage 2. For example, a teacher used a writing frame on an interactive whiteboard with Year 5 pupils to develop a counter-argument most effectively, following the receipt of an e-mail about school routines. Year 6 pupils used the Internet to access sports reports from across the world before re-casting the text, separating fact from opinion and adding their own views.

95 The use of ICT to support pupils who have special educational needs is increasing, partly as a result of training. There is good practice in a minority of schools, involving a variety of programs that are used systematically to sustain pupils' motivation and reinforce key skills. However, in many schools there is still little use of ICT to support such pupils.

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Assessment

96 Most teachers undertake a considerable amount of assessment. Typically, this includes discussion and observation, marking of pupils' written work, testing, as well as broader scrutiny of pupils' work across classes in a year group for the purposes of moderation of national curriculum levels and curricular target-setting. Teachers often use feedback from teaching assistants, both oral and sometimes in written form. Standardised and other tests, such as the optional national tests from the QCA, also contribute to teachers' knowledge of pupils' progress.

97 The best marking of pupils' writing contributes successfully to their understanding of how they need to improve their work, especially at Key Stage 2. One Year 6 teacher wrote:

'Well done - a superb high level 5 piece of writing. Good points:

- *Well-written and organised in paragraphs*
- *Your details make the reader interested*
- *Good balance of information and persuasion.*

To improve your writing further, you need to vary the sorts of sentences you write more and punctuate them accurately, for example, semi-colons.'

98 Where pupils are involved in evaluating their own work in a structured way, linked to objectives, this is helpful in enabling them to understand their targets for improvement, not least because they have gone some way to identifying the targets for themselves. In one school, Key Stage 2 pupils felt that completing their own written evaluations was helpful: 'We see what we can improve on next time'; 'We make ourselves targets as well as the teacher'; 'Looking back on evaluations is helpful. I'm thinking: I can do that now'. Not all target-setting was sufficiently rigorous: some targets were too general and insufficient attention was given to reviewing and setting new targets during the year.

99 The extent to which assessment is used to inform planning varies. The picture is largely positive, although there is scope for more precise links. Many teachers evaluate their lessons through effective annotation of their written planning which is used subsequently to adjust pupil groups, to identify areas for future revision or to highlight a key point for the next lesson.

100 The transfer of assessment information from one class teacher to another within the same school, for example at the end of the academic year, is generally good. Typically, this is based on a variety of records, examples of pupils' work and summative descriptions supported by test data. However, where assessment and planning are less effective, the links between the information gathered on individual pupils and the planning for a group or a class are not secure. Particularly at the start of the school year, time is wasted because pupils are given work that is either too easy or too difficult for them.

Planning

101 Without exception, the good teaching described in this report derived from good planning. The teachers had a very clear sense of what needed to be taught and how the tasks planned for pupils would help them to meet the objectives during a lesson or over the course of a series of lessons. In particular, the independent work was planned as a continuation of the work with the whole class at the start of the lesson. It was not simply a series of activities that each group in the class would do on different days of the week.

102 Such planning was not elaborate. Planning which is too detailed inhibits change and constrains the way in which information gained from formative assessment during the week can be used to focus on pupils' needs more precisely.

103 The best planning for the teaching of literacy, based on the National Literacy Strategy, showed:

- *a sharp focus on the objectives in the Framework, not just for a single lesson but*

followed through over the course of a week or a fortnight in a unit of work on a particular aspect of literacy

- *systematic teaching of word-level work, with daily word-level work in the foundation stage and Key Stage 1*
- *the integration of sentence-level work within the teaching of shared writing, so that the one reinforced the other*
- *independent work and guided writing which derived from whole-class work on shared texts*
- *regular guided reading, matched to the needs of groups*
- *a clear purpose for the plenary, deriving from the objectives for the lesson and often with a link to literacy work on the following day or in another subject.*

Curriculum and Organisation

Allocation of time for the teaching of English

104 The daily literacy hour, with very few exceptions, remains a regular fixture of the morning timetable of primary schools. The vast majority of schools also recognise that the literacy hour alone will not provide sufficient teaching to fulfil all the requirements of the English programmes of study. A very few schools seek to teach English only through daily literacy hours; most recognise, however, that this time is not sufficient.

105 The improvement of standards in writing remains a priority and schools allocate additional time outside the literacy hour for this. There are considerable variations in the amount of time allocated. In one school, for example, between 30 and 45 minutes is timetabled once a week for additional writing while another school sets aside a weekly two hour lesson. A small core of schools continue not to teach a structured literacy hour on a Friday in order to allow time for extended writing. There is a danger that this time is not used for the direct teaching of writing (through shared and guided writing, for example) but simply for giving pupils time to practise writing. The objectives from the National Literacy Strategy *Framework* should be clearly evident in the planning and teaching, even if pupils are allowed more than the usual time for composition.

106 Besides writing, other areas covered in the additional time for English include the teaching of handwriting, spelling, speaking and listening and, very occasionally, drama. Again, there is variation in the patterns of provision: in one school, an extra ten minutes a day was devoted to handwriting in Key Stage 1 while in Key Stage 2 there were two or three sessions a week during the autumn term. In contrast, in another school each class had a daily 15-minute session devoted to spelling. Schools are recognising increasingly the contribution that the direct teaching of speaking and listening can make to literacy and are including this in their planning. Schools are also aware of the need to ensure more opportunities for speaking and listening for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL).

107 In a large number of schools, additional time is devoted to reading, mostly guided reading although with some time set aside for the traditional practice of 'hearing readers'. The guided reading has usually been taken out of the literacy hour to allow for more time for writing, particularly guided work, within it. However, it does not always occur outside the literacy hour for all classes: some schools use it outside the hour only for particular year groups or classes. Other activities covered in the extra time allocated to reading include story sessions and the teaching of library skills. Many schools continue to provide quiet reading time, usually immediately after lunch. If this happens daily, this is not good use of a significant amount of time each week. Where they are taught outside the literacy hour, catch-up programmes, such as Additional Literacy Support or 'booster' classes, also add to the time allocated to English.

108 A large majority of schools allocate between seven and eight hours a week to English overall, usually with more time at Key Stage 2 than at Key Stage 1. Few schools at present have any coherent rationale linking the work covered in the additional time they spend on English, for example during quiet reading time, with what is taught in the daily literacy hour. Too often this results in unnecessary duplication and insufficient reference to the objectives of the National Literacy Strategy *Framework*. There is an urgent need for schools to audit the amount of time given to English and its use in all other subjects in order to identify gaps, both in the application of English in other subjects and in the teaching of the national curriculum programmes of study for English. Schools should use the findings to review the teaching of English across the whole curriculum and, where necessary, to develop its teaching in a planned and coherent fashion across all year groups.

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Impact of the National Literacy Strategy on the rest of the curriculum

109 Headteachers in a nationally representative sample of 50 primary schools, who were interviewed as part of a survey by HMI in the spring term, all reported that it is becoming increasingly difficult to sustain a balanced curriculum. They observed that while the overall breadth of subject coverage in the curriculum is not generally threatened, it often lacks sufficient depth in much of the work in the non-core foundation subjects, such as the development of enquiry skills in history and geography and the refining of technical skills in the more practical subjects.

110 With only one exception, all the schools in the survey provide time outside the literacy hour every week for specific aspects of English. The maximum amount of additional time was five hours a week, although the majority of schools, around two thirds, allocate between one and a half and two and a half extra hours a week to English. Most of this extra time for English is used for sustained writing. Other activities include a quiet reading session at the start of the afternoon session, handwriting, and individual reading to a teacher or another adult. Additional curriculum time is also taken up by booster classes for English in Years 5 and 6 and, where they are taught outside the hour, by intervention programmes such as Early Literacy Support and, sometimes, Additional Learning Support. All of these additional activities are reported by the headteachers as sources of pressure on the whole curriculum, but they also attribute some of this pressure to the demands on them to meet higher and higher performance targets, as measured by the national tests in Years 2 and 6.

111 The subjects most affected by the pressure on curriculum time are history, geography, design technology and art and design. Just under a half of the schools reported that they are now giving less time to art and design, while a third report a reduction of time for history, geography or design technology. The most worrying aspect of this reduction of time for the foundation subjects is the tendency of schools to cut back on the very aspects of subjects, notably practical and investigative work, that enable pupils to apply and refine what they have learned and that provide vitality and challenge. This represents a serious narrowing of the curriculum.

112 The concerns of the schools in the survey and the adverse effects on the curriculum that they describe, should be seen in the context of the positive impact that the two national strategies are having on teaching and standards in English and mathematics. In the short term, the gains made in these subjects may be felt to provide sufficient compensation for the losses in other subjects, but this may be less sustainable in the medium to long term when attention may turn more closely to the balance and nature of the primary curriculum as a whole.

Teaching of literacy in reception classes

113 The inspection evidence on the first year in which the foundation stage curriculum was introduced paints an encouraging picture of the literacy curriculum and its teaching in reception classes.[3] Having come to terms successfully with the changes of approach brought about by the National Literacy Strategy, teachers have also had to take account of the Early Learning Goals and the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage. Although the National Literacy Strategy *Framework* is aligned with the guidance for the foundation stage, there is a greater emphasis in the latter on learning through play. The challenge for reception teachers is to provide a curriculum that successfully incorporates both approaches into their planning and practice.

114 The quality of teaching in reception classes is rarely less than satisfactory and much of it is good. Planning is generally effective. Most teachers use the curriculum guidance for the foundation stage and refer also to the detail of the National Literacy Strategy *Framework*. The majority of reception class teachers demonstrate good understanding of what to teach and how to teach it in ways that engage

[3] *Teaching literacy and mathematics in reception classes: A survey by HMI.* Available on www.ofsted.gov.uk

the interest of young children. Few teachers had received copies of the advice issued by the DfES to support both strategies.

115 Teachers commonly introduce the elements of the literacy hour gradually over the second half of the autumn term, following the completion of baseline assessments. By the end of the autumn term, most teachers are sharing big books regularly with their classes and teaching phonics, although not always daily.

116 In-service training for the foundation stage, and its timing, influenced the point at which the elements of the literacy hour were brought together, resulting in some complex organisational patterns. For example, there were teachers who in the spring and summer terms taught the elements of the literacy hour separately, but who had at some point in the autumn term taught a full daily literacy hour. By the summer half-term, however, about four fifths of the teachers had assembled most of the elements of the literacy lesson into a daily hour. A small minority of teachers, however, had not brought the elements of the literacy hour together before the end of the summer term. The training was most effective when LEA foundation stage teams co-operated closely with National Literacy Strategy consultants. Where this occurred, the trainers presented well-considered, coherent messages about how to teach the elements of the literacy hour and when best to bring these elements together in a continuous, daily lesson. Some teachers, however, had received no training for the foundation stage.

117 Teachers of mixed-age classes usually teach the full literacy hour daily from the beginning of the autumn term, providing effectively, on the whole, for reception pupils through careful planning and judicious use of teaching assistants. In some of these classes, reception children are introduced gradually to the literacy hour after a settling-in period. Teaching assistants and nursery nurses make a strong contribution to teaching and learning in reception classes. Their influence is particularly marked in mixed-age classes and in those where children are admitted at several points during the year.

118 There is a sense of professional isolation among some reception teachers, particularly in schools where there are no other foundation stage teachers with whom to discuss problems or share ideas. Many reception teachers still, understandably, identify more with Key Stage 1 than with the foundation stage, particularly where the reception teacher has management responsibilities in the main school.

119 Few headteachers so far have attended any training for the foundation stage and few are familiar with the DfES guidance for the reception year, although it was issued to all headteachers at the LEA conferences in the autumn term 2000. The majority of headteachers are not, therefore, in a good position to support and advise their reception teachers about implementing the curriculum in the foundation stage.

120 The majority of teachers make appropriate use of baseline assessment to group children with similar attainments, plan suitable activities and, in some instances, to set curricular targets. Most teachers have a good knowledge of the attainment of the children in their classes and use it effectively. Virtually all teachers keep some records of children's progress in, for example, phonics, but there are few reception classes with detailed, yet manageable, assessment and record keeping procedures.

121 During the year, well-organised local education authorities (LEAs) issued helpful planning booklets, in which the Early Learning Goals were mapped against the detailed teaching objectives in the National Literacy Strategy *Framework* and the steps in *Progression in Phonics*. Many reception teachers, however, had not received such useful guidance. Few schools have revised their schemes of work in line with the foundation stage in order to incorporate the aspects of language and literacy not covered in the National Literacy Strategy *Framework*, such as role-play, drama and speaking and listening in different situations. Just over half the schools have written action plans to help them implement the foundation stage, but only a quarter of the plans that were produced had enough detail to be useful.

Very few of the plans describe how communication, language and literacy are to be developed, or how the children will be prepared for Year 1. The plans rarely include curricular targets. Few schools have established any criteria by which to judge how well the new curriculum, and its relationship with the National Literacy Strategy, is working.

Transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3

122 HMI made a small number of visits to primary schools, focusing on Year 6 in the summer term, to evaluate transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. All 30 schools visited continued to teach literacy in Year 6 throughout the summer term, although some introduced a more flexible programme after Year 6 pupils had taken the national curriculum tests.

123 National curriculum test results and teacher assessment levels for Year 6 pupils were transferred by all primary schools to their partner secondary school. This transfer was often in two stages, with teacher assessments sent to the secondary school early in the summer term and test results sent when they became available. Primary schools rarely transferred the data electronically and very few passed on raw scores or test scripts. Although several primary schools had a system for recording curricular targets for literacy for individual pupils, this information was not transferred. More detailed information, however, was collected and transferred for pupils with special educational needs, including copies of individual education plans which contained more specific learning targets. These were almost always related to English rather than other subjects.

124 Very few primary schools were engaged in curriculum continuity projects with their partner secondary schools in any subjects and there were no examples of curriculum projects involving English across Key Stages 2 and 3 in the schools visited. Examples of the exchange of teachers were equally rare, usually amounting only to a visit made by the secondary English department to observe teaching in a Year 6 class. Few teachers took the opportunity for discussion following the observation. Year 6 teachers rarely had the chance to observe English teaching in Year 7.

125 Although the quality of teaching in Year 6 was generally good and pupils' attainment in the schools visited was good, primary school headteachers and Year 6 teachers had little knowledge of what pupils might encounter in English in Year 7. Even in the LEAs where the secondary schools were piloting the Key Stage 3 strategy, the primary headteachers knew very little about it. Few schools had a structured programme designed to prepare pupils for any changes in teaching styles that they might experience at secondary school. Preparation was usually of a pastoral nature, but even this was often unstructured.

Inclusion

126 The government has a strong commitment to developing policies for social and educational inclusion. Educational inclusion pays particular attention to the provision made for and the achievement of different groups of pupils within a school. This report focuses on pupils from minority ethnic groups; pupils who need support to learn English as an additional language; pupils from Traveller communities; and pupils with special educational needs, as well as the achievement and responses of boys and girls.

Pupils from minority ethnic groups

127 The National Literacy Strategy provides a clear and challenging framework for raising standards for minority ethnic pupils. In some schools it has strengthened their continuing efforts to raise standards; in others it has set a challenge to improve provision.

128 Schools with pupils from Traveller communities provide some good examples of focused support and commitment to partnership in teaching. This was exemplified best in an initiative developed between an LEA literacy team and the multi-cultural educational service, including the Traveller team, which aimed to disseminate effective practice in the teaching of writing in schools working with pupils from minority ethnic groups. In a Year 2 class the teacher and a learning support assistant from the Traveller team had planned together a series of lessons using a text called *Melissa to the rescue*. This text, suggested by the support assistant, reflected Travellers' background and culture; it provided a very good resource, not just for the teaching of literacy but also for raising awareness of cultural differences. Some schools with pupils from Traveller communities, however, still have some way to go in developing their commitment to partnership in teaching and in avoiding over-reliance on the support of the Traveller education services.

129 Curricular targets linked to the objectives of the *Framework* are being incorporated more often into action plans for supporting pupils from Traveller communities and some LEA traveller teams have produced useful guidelines on supporting such pupils in the literacy hour. However, the Traveller education teams do not always have regular access to National Literacy Strategy training and documentation. The absence of appropriate training limits the effectiveness of the support they can provide.

130 Two features characterise good practice in schools with pupils from asylum-seeker families: a whole school commitment to raising achievement and focused support to secure pupils' full access to the curriculum. In one mixed Year 4/5 class, an asylum support worker made an effective contribution throughout the literacy hour. In the shared text work he sat alongside four Somali pupils, checking their understanding of the teacher's explanations and questions as well as providing additional explanations. He had benefited from regular planning meetings with the teacher, as well as the school's ethnic minority achievement grant (EMAG) co-ordinator, and, consequently, had a clear idea of how to provide support.

131 This school also had well-established, effective policies on equal opportunities, high expectations for all pupils and practical strategies to ensure that the pupils from asylum-seeker families felt secure and supported, not just in the classroom but also in the school. A 'buddy' system and the creation of different zones in the playground for a range of activities, supervised by older pupils, helped to ensure that newly arrived pupils settled in well and responded positively in the classroom.

132 Not all schools are effective in targeting support on underachieving pupils. Overall, the impact of the strategy in raising the achievement of Black Caribbean pupils is mixed. While there are examples of the use of data analysis and target setting, it is inconsistent, particularly in relation to analysing data by ethnic group and the subsequent targeting of support to tackle underachievement.

133 However, some schools achieve results above both their LEA and the national average. At the heart of their achievement is high quality teaching, often exemplified in the literacy hour. In a Year 6 class of 30 pupils, almost all from minority ethnic backgrounds, including Black Caribbean, the lesson focused on W H Auden's poem *Funeral Blues*. There was very good direct teaching about its structure and metaphors, enabling the pupils to produce high quality first drafts of their own poems. Pupils' responses were very good, especially during the whole-class shared work, when both boys and girls were keen to suggest words and metaphors to describe feelings of sorrow.

English as an additional language

134 The majority of schools with significant numbers of pupils speaking English as an additional language (EAL) provide support for pupils within the literacy hour. Many schools organise a judicious mix of in-class support and separate provision, while being aware of the need for flexibility for newly arrived pupils with little or no English. In all the schools visited, EMAG support is targeted at pupils who are at the early stages of learning English, in line with the guidance given by LEAs.

135 There has been an increase since last year in partnership in teaching between the class teacher and the EMAG teacher. More schools organise EMAG support for specific year groups for short blocks of time, usually half a term. A minority of schools, however, continue to allow EMAG staff to withdraw small groups of EAL pupils from the literacy hour to work with them separately. Where this approach is used rigidly, it is not always beneficial, especially for those at the early stages of learning English, who need to hear more fluent pupils using English. In these cases, the EMAG teachers are also less involved in planning with the teacher for the whole class.

136 Although schools are generally aware of the needs of 'second phase' bilingual learners, that is, pupils who are generally fluent in English but who may still require some support, they feel there is insufficient funding to provide support for groups of pupils other than those at the early stages of learning English. Consequently, any support for 'second phase' bilingual learners tends to be less well structured and more *ad hoc*.

137 Schools feel that the clear structure of the National Literacy Strategy *Framework* supports pupils who are learning English as an additional language, including second phase bilingual learners. However, some objectives are seen as particularly difficult for these pupils:

- *amongst word-level objectives, especially those related to vocabulary extension, such as proverbs and idioms*
- *amongst sentence-level objectives, those related to active/passive verbs, verb tenses, complex sentences*
- *amongst text-level objectives, especially those related to the development of inferential and evaluative reading skills and the retrieval of information beyond the literal.*

138 Schools also find it difficult to provide sufficient time within the curriculum for the development of speaking and listening but feel that this is particularly important to the progress of these pupils.

139 Schools are beginning to get better at analysing data in order to identify under-performing groups of pupils. The attainment of pupils from minority ethnic groups and those with EAL is analysed more systematically. Schools are also using the data to direct support where it is most needed. Information gathered generally includes the national curriculum and optional QCA test results, as well as any standardised data available. In one school the curriculum co-ordinator was recording test results onto a database in order to track pupils' progress more systematically. The EMAG staff also carried out end-of-year analyses of results. The information was used to identify groups of EAL pupils who were not making sufficient progress, in order to provide more focused support.

140 A significant number of schools report difficulties in recruiting good EMAG teachers. The result is that posts remain unfilled in

several schools; in others, teaching assistants have been appointed instead of EMAG teachers.

Special educational needs

141 The National Literacy Strategy has raised teachers' expectations of pupils with special educational needs and has supported them in setting clearer objectives. There is good use of support staff, mostly teaching assistants, and careful organisation to teach all pupils effectively, including those with SEN.

142 The clear structure of the National Literacy Strategy *Framework* has been helpful in teaching pupils with SEN. The shared text work is particularly effective, providing a greater range of text-types than the pupils have been accustomed to, as well as more complex and subtle language and narrative than they could read independently. The reading of a text as a whole class enables SEN pupils to see how other pupils read and enriches their experience of oral and written language. Since SEN pupils can often contribute well orally, teachers' skilful questioning enables them to be successful in front of their peers, increasing their confidence and self-esteem. Schools require a wider range of texts, however, which combine content which is appropriate for the age of the pupils with language suitable for SEN pupils.

143 Schools find the work on phonics within the *Framework* appropriate for pupils with SEN, including the use of *Progression in Phonics*, as well as commercially produced schemes. The content of sentence-level work, however, is often found to be too complex; this is generally the least successful section of the *Framework* for these pupils.

144 While the *Framework* itself has been welcomed by many schools, they often express concerns about the pace of teaching for pupils with SEN, which they consider too fast, and the lack of time to revise work or to provide more intensive teaching. A few schools have overcome this difficulty by improving the planning for individuals or small groups and monitoring pupils' progress more closely against the objectives of the *Framework*.

145 The National Literacy Strategy *Framework* is often used as the main reference point for assessing the progress and attainment of pupils with special educational needs in literacy, for example, noting targets for high and medium frequency words. In about a quarter of schools, however, pupils' targets in their individual education plans are too broad and are not linked sufficiently to the *Framework* or supported with clear strategies. A small but increasing number of schools use more specialist assessment and recording systems, such as the P-Scales or Performance Indicators for Value-added Testing (PIVATs) to supplement their recording of pupils' progress in literacy. The increasing complexity of SEN provision, including intervention programmes, sometimes results in difficulties in co-ordinating information about pupils' progress, especially where a number of additional part-time staff are employed to support specific initiatives.

146 In the best provision for SEN pupils, schools combine a range of intervention programmes, such as Additional Literacy Support and booster classes, with individual support based on individual education plans, to form a menu of support for SEN pupils. This is a positive development, and has the potential to improve provision and attainment for these pupils. Where pupils are withdrawn from the literacy hour, typically the teaching still takes account of the *Framework* objectives, but usually at a level below the pupils' chronological age and at a slower pace than the whole-class lesson.

147 ALS is the basis for much SEN provision. The support it provides has been welcomed by schools and it is used in a variety of ways, both within and outside the literacy hour. There is an increasing trend towards adapting it to meet the needs of a wider group of pupils, although schools note that it is most successful with the pupils for whom it was intended originally.

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Intervention

Early Literacy Support

148 Early Literacy Support (ELS) is aimed at those Year 1 pupils who, at the end of the autumn term, are not able to meet the relevant objectives in the National Literacy Strategy *Framework*. It was piloted during the year 2000/01 in around 40 LEAs and monitored by HMI.

149 Most LEAs and the vast majority of schools managed and implemented the pilot successfully. The majority of the LEAs monitored the pilot closely and established a solid foundation for subsequent LEA-wide implementation. The training for pilot schools was generally received well, although it was not always matched sufficiently to the differing needs of teachers and teaching assistants.

150 In general, the quality of teaching was good in the Year 1 lessons observed in the vast majority of schools. There was a good emphasis on the teaching of phonics, which was being given more attention than in literacy hours seen more generally. Teaching assistants made a substantial contribution to the overall success of the pilot. They were experienced staff, often with substantial prior experience of supporting literacy, and they established good partnerships with the Year 1 teachers. However, there was frequently insufficient time to discuss in detail the intervention lessons and the pupils' progress. Headteachers did not give enough priority to ensuring that the work of the teaching assistants during the intervention sessions was monitored by appropriate staff.

151 Pupils' responses to the intervention sessions were overwhelmingly positive. Teachers observed marked gains in pupils' confidence and willingness to contribute within the literacy hour. Parents appreciated the extra support their children were receiving and also commented on their increased confidence.

152 One of the main weaknesses was assessment, partly because of the late distribution of the progress checks that had been designed for the pilot. As a result, not all schools were able to assess the progress of the pupils in the intervention groups using nationally agreed assessment tasks. The strategy recognised this in its evaluation of the pilot and made improvements for the national implementation of ELS.

153 There was little involvement of LEA special educational needs support services and, in most cases, SEN co-ordinators did not attend the LEA-led three-day training. This had a significant impact on planning further work for the summer term for those pupils who had not made sufficient progress in the spring. In most cases, schools' and LEAs' plans for follow-up were extremely tenuous, a finding confirmed by inspection in the summer term.

Role of teaching assistants

154 From September 2000, schools received substantial funding to increase the number of teaching assistants and to provide induction for new ones. In many primary schools, there are now as many teaching assistants as qualified teachers, although the full-time equivalent number of teaching assistants during term time is typically one half to two thirds of the full-time equivalent number of teachers. There are generally more teaching assistants in reception classes and Key Stage 1 than in Key Stage 2 and more for literacy than in mathematics, although the numbers of teaching assistants at Key Stage 2 is increasing, partly due to the introduction of ALS.

155 Since the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy, the kind of support which teaching assistants provide has changed significantly. Although a few teachers still do not expect teaching assistants to take an active part in the teaching, most value them highly. They recognise that they have the potential to improve the overall quality of teaching and learning. They act as 'another pair of eyes' to monitor pupils' responses and enable teachers to share and discuss their ideas with another adult.

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156 Teaching assistants are now usually present throughout the literacy hour in both key stages. Increasingly, during whole-class teaching of word and sentence-level work, and during the plenary, the teacher and teaching assistant work together, with the teaching assistant often making an explicit contribution, for example, by helping the teacher in a role play involving puppets. More often, the teaching assistant sits with pupils. In a Year 1 class, for example, the teaching assistant sat with a group of four lower-attaining pupils who remained part of the larger class group but received this extra support. She had an additional copy of the text and pointed to each word as it was read out by the teacher. She encouraged the individuals around her to do the same which helped them to follow and understand the story more fully.

157 There has been increasing use of teaching assistants in shared writing sessions to write on the board what was agreed by the class and the teacher; to encourage reluctant pupils to contribute ideas; or to ask 'planted' questions to move the writing along. In a reception class lesson using the poem 'What is pink?' as a stimulus for writing sentences, a teaching assistant made a very good contribution by encouraging a boy with emotional and behavioural difficulties to answer questions and by writing a suggested sentence on the whiteboard with a deliberate mistake, 'A smelly pog is pink', for the pupils to spot. This caused much hilarity and kept the pupils engaged.

158 During the remainder of the literacy hour, it is usual for teaching assistants to take responsibility for a group of pupils, often those with SEN. Teaching assistants usually follow the teachers' plans, although they may be using prescribed materials, such as those from the ALS programme.

159 As a result of their training and experience, most teaching assistants have acquired good subject knowledge and have developed skills in asking open-ended questions and in following up pupils' responses productively. Teachers and teaching assistants comment frequently on how the specialist knowledge which teaching assistants acquire from programmes such as ALS, ELS, and *Progression in Phonics* improves the quality of the support they are able to provide for literacy more generally.

160 Most teaching assistants provide at least satisfactory support for pupils, particularly when working with groups of pupils or individuals. There is little difference between the quality of support provided for pupils in Key Stage 1 and those in Key Stage 2, although the support is generally best for pupils in reception classes.

161 Teaching assistants provide the best support for pupils when they work with teachers who understand and plan well for their role. Such teachers capitalise on the teaching assistants' particular strengths, communicate clearly what they expect them to do, and have good arrangements for getting feedback on pupils' progress. Teachers are increasingly providing feedback sheets which structure more formally the way in which teaching assistants report to them on pupils' progress.

162 The most significant benefit to pupils is the extra adult attention teaching assistants provide. Pupils in a group with a teaching assistant receive a high level of individual attention, and the teacher is also able to spend more time with the rest of the class. Reception class teachers regard this as being particularly important. Teaching assistants are also able to support the teacher in matching work more closely to pupils' needs, for example, by working separately with a small group.

163 It is frequently possible to identify clear progress made by a pupil or a group of pupils as a result of the support provided directly by the teaching assistant. Teaching assistants also influence progress and achievement indirectly by helping to create a more effective learning environment. Schools have not yet, however, developed strategies for evaluating more widely or systematically the effect of teaching assistants' support on pupils' achievements in literacy other than, sometimes, through the impact of ALS.

Leadership and Management

Influence of the headteacher

164 The evaluation of the first year of the strategy reported that 'the contribution of the headteacher was one of the most significant factors affecting implementation'. This is still true. The leadership and management of the strategy are now good in more than half of schools and at least satisfactory in almost nine out of ten. The amount of good leadership continues to improve and has a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

165 In the schools where the leadership and management of the headteacher are very good, the quality of teaching is very rarely unsatisfactory; in most cases it is good. However, where leadership and management are less effective, the quality of teaching is much more variable and there are more lessons where it is unsatisfactory.

166 The analysis and interpretation of numerical attainment data have improved since the second year of the strategy. Where schools undertake a rigorous examination of all the available data, target-setting is generally making a significant contribution to raising standards. In almost half of schools, target-setting is good, but it remains unsatisfactory in one school in seven.

167 In schools where target-setting is particularly effective, numerical data are used in a number of positive ways. For example:

- *to examine test scores and other information to enable the school to set realistic but challenging targets at Key Stage 2 and, increasingly, at Key Stage 1*
- *to use the attainment information to distinguish between pupils' performance in reading and writing, between boys and girls and, where appropriate, EAL and minority ethnic groups. This enables the teachers to set specific targets for improvement for an aspect of literacy or a particular group of pupils*
- *to identify broad curricular targets such as required improvements in non-narrative writing, spelling or the acquisition of phonics*
- *to assess individual pupils' attainment and establish an accurate record from baseline assessment to the end of Year 6, sometimes using ICT successfully to help to monitor progress.*

168 Where practice is ineffective, although the statistics are available, schools undertake insufficient analysis. Furthermore, some schools are still too cautious: they set unambitious targets and make conservative predictions. Targets are not always revised regularly in the light of annual assessments and improvements in pupils' attainment. In particular, such schools do not build into their target-setting the probable effects of any improvements in attainment resulting from their implementation of the strategy so far.

169 Headteachers are beginning to understand better the process of curricular target-setting, but there are still too many who do not. In two in five schools, curricular targets are clearly understood and used effectively, but in almost one in three schools the practice is unsatisfactory.

170 The National Literacy Strategy conferences for headteachers, held during the autumn term 2000 in every LEA, generally made a positive contribution towards improving the understanding and use of curricular target-setting.

> **In one school, the headteacher engaged the staff in a discussion of curricular targets and how they might be used to improve standards in writing. Some of the materials from the autumn conference were used for support and reference. The literacy co-ordinator conducted an audit of the extent and quality of pupils' writing, collating**

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responses from each teacher, after which targets, taken from the target-setting booklet, were used to establish precise objectives for groups of pupils. These were discussed with pupils, enabling them to have a greater understanding of ways in which they could improve their writing.

In contrast, in a school which was not represented at the autumn term conference, the headteacher was unfamiliar with the notion of curricular targets and had not established a common understanding amongst staff of what needed to be done to improve pupils' writing.

171 Almost all headteachers recognise the need to raise attainment in writing, particularly that of boys. However, not all establish a systematic whole-school approach to manage this effectively. One successful school produced a detailed action plan to identify the various stages of the process. This included:

- *the identification of clear curricular targets for the improvements in pupils' writing*
- *the provision of additional training to promote more effective strategies for the teaching of writing*
- *the scrutiny of planning to check that teaching objectives were clearly linked to the desired improvements, and that sufficient time was devoted to the teaching of writing*
- *regular observations of literacy lessons, by the headteacher and key members of staff, to ensure that the teaching was focused appropriately*
- *the scrutiny of pupils' written work to measure progress and identify areas for further improvement*
- *a regular review of overall progress and a summative evaluation of the implementation of the plan at the end of the year.*

172 In a number of schools, which tend to be concentrated in large cities and certain regions of the country, headteachers face considerable problems which make continued, successful implementation of the National Literacy Strategy a greater challenge than for schools elsewhere. A high turnover of staff, high levels of teachers' absence, a shortage of good supply teachers, too many short-term contracts and serious recruitment difficulties make it much more difficult for the headteachers in these schools to ensure good teaching and high standards.

173 The most effective headteachers have an unstinting commitment to the National Literacy Strategy; they have balanced a number of competing priorities during a period when the demands for further training have been high. Literacy, numeracy, several 'catch-up' initiatives, ICT, as well as the recruitment and induction of new teaching assistants, have all created additional demands. Despite this, these headteachers have maintained successfully the momentum of implementation and improvement during the third year of the strategy.

Influence of the literacy co-ordinator

174 The **literacy co-ordinators** have continued to exert a positive influence upon the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy. They have helped to promote and sustain good practice, sometimes in close co-operation with the headteacher. A number of larger schools, in particular, have developed an effective system in which the headteacher and literacy co-ordinator work together to provide joint leadership.

175 In such schools, delegation to the co-ordinator is reasonable and manageable and might include leading training, providing demonstration lessons and sharing the monitoring through the sampling of pupils' work and the observation of teaching. Importantly, the headteacher maintains an overview and continues to be involved in key monitoring tasks and target-setting. When co-ordinators have accepted a greater share of the work in managing and leading developments in literacy, headteachers have been able to focus their attention on other important initiatives.

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Influence of the SEN co-ordinator

176 Most **SEN co-ordinators** (SENCOs) teach a class as well as carrying a heavy administrative load. Their SEN activities are managed, typically, through one weekly session of non-contact time. Their work tends to be focused on assessment and target setting for individual pupils, with the support for pupils provided largely by teaching assistants. SENCOs usually have close links with the school's literacy co-ordinator, and often influence approaches to literacy this way or through combining their SENCO role with other curricular or management roles. Where the SENCO is also the literacy co-ordinator, there can be benefits in terms of planning and differentiation across the school.

177 The more time SENCOs have for their role, the broader their approach tends to be to providing for pupils' special needs within literacy. The role combines management with the provision of specialist advice, involving joint planning with colleagues for SEN groups, and the allocation of support from teaching assistants. There is an increasing training element in the role and more monitoring of pupils' progress.

Training and Support for the National Literacy Strategy

LEA headteachers' conferences

178 In the autumn term 2000, conferences for headteachers were held in every LEA in England, led jointly by National Literacy Strategy regional directors and senior LEA personnel. The aim was to ensure that headteachers were committed fully to the strategy and to engage them in discussion about national and local priorities in raising standards.

179 Attendance varied across the country, but it was generally above 90% and, in several cases, it was 100%. In a minority of LEAs, attendance was low, occasionally because of flooding and the fuel crisis, but otherwise through headteachers' unwillingness to attend. In one LEA only half the headteachers attended; in two others, only two thirds did so.

180 In the majority of conferences, the atmosphere was constructive and the headteachers responded positively to the presentations and discussions. Most headteachers valued the information on target-setting, although there is continuing cynicism about the process of target-setting and the use of league tables.

181 The presentations by the regional directors were good. They spoke with authority, listened well, managed difficult questions with skill and diplomacy and answered technical questions knowledgeably, such as those on funding. Their presentations were succinct, comprehensive and confident. Where LEA literacy consultants were involved, their contributions were also good.

182 In the majority of conferences the presenters worked well together and gave consistent messages about the National Literacy Strategy, both nationally and locally. Managers of the National Literacy Strategy within LEAs often asked pertinent questions of their headteachers.

183 The most effective training included:

- *crisp, lively presentations, which engaged the audience's attention*
- *clear messages about the strategy's key priorities, particularly in relation to writing; the importance of high quality literacy teaching; and practical guidance on the setting of curricular targets*
- *opportunities throughout the day for group discussion and flexibility in timing for questions and feedback*
- *good advertising of the National Literacy Strategy materials, especially* Progression in Phonics, Grammar for Writing *and the* Spelling Bank, *with reference also made to the HMI discussion paper on writing*
- *attendance by senior LEA personnel, as well as link inspectors, which strengthened the relationship between schools and the LEA.*

184 The timing of the conferences was wholly appropriate. Many headteachers felt that they had been given clear direction for continuing implementation and consolidation of the strategy, as well as guidance on their role within it.

Grammar for Writing

185 The National Literacy Strategy publication *Grammar for Writing* was the main focus of training during the year. This was aimed initially at Year 5 and Year 6 teachers although, during the year, some LEAs had completed this stage of training and, appropriately, were also training teachers in Years 3 and 4. Schools' responses to the materials confirm the generally positive responses to the training itself, although not all schools are yet making regular use of them.

186 In all LEAs the training was led by the LEA literacy consultants and followed closely the centrally-produced materials, including Powerpoint presentations and very useful video extracts. The quality of the training observed was always at least satisfactory.

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two thirds of it was good. In the vast majority of cases, the presenters had good subject knowledge and were very familiar with the materials.

187 Teachers' overall response to the training was good and the *Grammar for Writing* publication itself was much welcomed as a source of ideas and support. Responses to the training on grammatical knowledge were more mixed. In a small minority of LEAs, there was some defensiveness, although this was soon dispelled by the consultants. In most LEAs, however, the participants reacted very positively. Younger teachers, in particular, acknowledged the gaps in their own knowledge and enjoyed examining the grammar which is necessary to teach sentence-level work at Key Stage 2.

188 The success of the most effective training was related to:

- *the consultants' secure knowledge of grammar and their ability to explain clearly*
- *very accurate and confident responses to participants' questions*
- *the ability of the consultants to persuade and convince the audience about the importance of teaching grammar as part of writing*
- *helpful illustrations of how the material might be used in the literacy hour, especially in shared writing*
- *sensitive and sensible introductions to the video extracts to focus the participants' attention on the teaching strategies being used.*

English as an Additional Language

189 Training provided by LEAs for teaching EAL pupils is very mixed. Some schools report good advice from the LEA and EMAG services, while others are much more critical of provision. Where LEAs have run training, schools are generally positive; there are also a small number of good examples of individual support. In one school, for example, the LEA literacy consultant trained five teaching assistants, employed under EMAG funding, to support EAL pupils within the literacy hour. However, a significant number of schools are unaware of the National Literacy Strategy training materials *Supporting pupils learning English as an additional language*. When HMI visited a small sample of LEAs which had high numbers of pupils with EAL, none provided any training on 'second phase' bilingual learners.

190 LEA training for EMAG staff varies significantly. In some LEAs, the central EMAG team provides a regular central programme of training; in others, the devolvement of EMAG funding to schools has resulted in very infrequent training and few opportunities for EMAG co-ordinators to meet regularly. In the best example, one LEA provides an extensive programme on supporting EAL learners, not just in English but across other subjects as well.

Role and impact of the LEA literacy consultants

191 As well as providing effective central training in their LEAs, the literacy consultants have undertaken a wide range of work in schools. This includes demonstration lessons, in-service training, observing and giving feedback to teachers, undertaking literacy audits and advising English co-ordinators about the management of literacy in their schools.

192 Where schools have been allocated support from a consultant, it has been well received in nearly all cases. Consultants are regarded highly. The majority of schools value their practical advice and the clearly focused support which raises teachers' confidence. Schools which have not had individual support nevertheless feel that the consultants lead central training effectively and that they offer good telephone advice and support for literacy co-ordinators through local network meetings.

Role and impact of Expert Literacy Teachers

193 The Expert Literacy Teachers (ELT) initiative enables teachers to visit other schools to observe the teaching of literacy lessons by a skilled teacher. Unlike the Leading Mathematics

Teachers (LMT) programme, the ELT initiative did not benefit from a centrally suggested programme of training and management. Consequently, there is a wide variation how the Expert Literacy Teachers are organised.

194 The majority of the work of the Expert Literacy Teachers comprises demonstration lessons in their own schools for visiting teachers or their own staff. In a few LEAs they also help to lead training, contribute to the writing of publications or lead discussions at network meetings. These initiatives, which are well organised by most of the LEAs visited, make good contributions to LEAs' implementation of the strategy. Most Expert Literacy Teachers receive some form of briefing or training, usually lasting one day, followed by termly or half-termly meetings. There is little formal evaluation of the Expert Literacy Teachers programme by LEAs.

195 The quality of the teaching in the vast majority of lessons taught by ELTs is at least good; in two thirds it is very good. The lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives and purposeful tasks for pupils. The high quality, direct teaching presents a good model for the observers, for example in guided and shared writing and phonics. A very few lessons are only just satisfactory: it is important that those selected for this role present consistently good models of teaching.

196 Discussions held before and after the demonstration lessons are an important feature of the visits. Their quality, however, is variable. Pre-lesson discussions are generally focused and provided a useful introduction. Many of the post-lesson discussions, however, lack sufficient focus on literacy. Too often the teachers drift into general discussion of classroom management and resources.

197 For many of the visiting teachers, improving writing is a priority in their schools. However, very few have a clear focus for their observations and are not briefed clearly in their own schools. Several LEAs, however, ask the observers to submit a brief form to identify how they intend to build on their observations.

198 Almost all headteachers, literacy co-ordinators and the teachers themselves feel that the teaching has improved as a result of the observations which have been made. Improvements noted include: more specific learning objectives; a brisker pace, higher expectations, and the appropriate use of technical language. The observations give teachers confidence that sensible adaptations can be made to the literacy hour, such as starting with word-level work, without losing sight of the objectives in the *Framework*.

Role and impact of the regional directors

199 The regional directors work very hard to ensure LEAs maintain a clear focus on the priorities of the strategy and they played a key role in the LEA conferences for headteachers in the autumn term. They are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of individual LEAs and the majority of them are unafraid to challenge LEAs where necessary. They provide some opportunities for LEAs in similar circumstances to share ideas and good practice, although this could be developed further. Communication between the regional directors and the LEA literacy consultants is also good, and the training which they provide for consultants is consistently of high quality.

Role and impact of local education authorities in National Literacy Strategy implementation

200 The vast majority of LEAs are implementing the strategy successfully. Literacy is given a high priority on LEAs' development plans. Statistical data and other information are used as a basis for school intervention and the LEAs clearly identify trends and areas for development. Such LEAs share common characteristics:

- *strong support provided for the strategy from senior staff*
- *appropriate resources given to the National Literacy Strategy manager, including time to carry out the work*

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- *good support for literacy consultants and regular monitoring of their work*
- *a rigorous programme of appropriate support for the different categories of schools where the purpose of a consultant's work with a school is clearly understood*
- *appropriate training and briefings for link advisers/inspectors and other LEA personnel, as well as exchange of relevant information on schools*
- *good liaison and exchange of information between the literacy and numeracy teams, link advisers/inspectors and other support services*
- *LEA training by the literacy consultants focused on relevant issues; schools' attendance is monitored closely and absences are followed up*
- *additional guidance for teachers provided where necessary with good practice disseminated through initiatives such as Expert Literacy Teachers.*

201 There are about 15 LEAs, however, where the lack of effective implementation of the strategy causes concern and which have remained in this category for well over a year. Although they differ by type, size and location, they share similar weaknesses, including:

- *instability within the LEA because of restructuring, outsourcing, or temporary appointments, as well as difficulties in the recruitment of suitable key personnel*
- *insufficient use of statistical data as a basis for intervention*
- *a wide gap between the LEA's own targets and schools' aggregated targets*
- *a lack of coherence in the identification of schools requiring support, with schools allowed to become over-dependent on support when it is provided*
- *lack of rigour in the management and monitoring of the literacy team*
- *poor liaison between the literacy team and other LEA services, with link inspectors being insufficiently briefed on evaluating the strategy*
- *poor quality training provided by the literacy team with too little focus on national and local priorities.*

Conclusion

202 The National Literacy Strategy has been in place for three years. Within that time, there have been substantial changes in the teaching of literacy. Until 2001, standards were rising steadily at the end of Key Stage 2, a reflection of the radical change of approach to literacy in which schools had been engaged. The standstill in the improvements in the overall Key Stage 2 test results this year prompts reflection on the significant progress that has been achieved so far and analysis of what still needs to be done if the government's expectations of further improvements are to be realised.

203 The fall in the standards of reading, albeit slight, at the end of Key Stage 2 this year is something of a surprise. Teachers' increased focus on teaching writing, combined with the frequent use of shared reading to support it, may have resulted in a lack of attention to the teaching of comprehension skills. Teachers are becoming increasingly knowledgeable about how to teach pupils to analyse the structure, grammar and vocabulary of texts and how to use characteristic generic features in their own writing. This emphasis on analysis, combined with teachers' uncertainties about the nature and purpose of guided reading, particularly at Key Stage 2, may have been enough to deflect their attention from the importance of teaching reading comprehension skills such as inference and deduction.

204 The priority schools have given, rightly, to English and mathematics in the primary curriculum, has resulted in improvements in standards that outweigh any of the adverse effects on other subjects, at least in the medium term. In the longer term, however, these gains will need to be considered in the context of their continuing impact on the primary curriculum as a whole. HMI have already begun a survey on the teaching of the non-core foundation subjects in primary schools.

205 The 7 year olds who took the Key Stage 1 tests in 2001 began school in the year in which the National Literacy Strategy was introduced. They are the first cohort to have been taught throughout Key Stage 1 by teachers using the National Literacy Strategy *Framework*. The cumulative effect of the National Literacy Strategy after three years in reception and Key Stage 1 is encouraging. In reading, there has been an increase of seven percentage points in the proportion of pupils achieving level 2B+, while in writing the increase has been 11 percentage points. The building blocks for higher standards of English at the end of Key Stage 2 are now in place at the end of Key Stage 1. However, attention still needs to be focused on ensuring that an increasing proportion of pupils attain the more demanding level 2B by the end of Key Stage 1.

206 This report finds the quality of the independent work unsatisfactory in around one in five literacy hours and states that too much time is wasted, consequently, in poor work. This is not a reason for abandoning this part of the literacy hour, but, in view of the pressure on other subjects, it is absorbing time in some schools that they cannot afford to waste. It is, nevertheless, important that pupils learn to work independently and that they have opportunities to apply what they are learning. Work in pairs and small groups during this part of the literacy hour can be beneficial, particularly for boys.

207 The plenary is an essential part of the lesson, but its quality has not improved since the strategy began. This is a matter of serious concern. As with independent work, part of the problem lies in a lack of understanding of its purposes: for assessment, feedback, consolidation, evaluation and the linking of the lesson to the next one, or to another area of the curriculum. The plenary is poorly used if it is simply a bolt-on extra which provides an opportunity for groups of pupils to present their work daily: it is essential time for making sure that pupils have grasped the objectives and made progress, so that the next lesson can begin on firm foundations.

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208 One of the main findings of this report, based on initial evidence from current inspections, is the poor quality of the arrangements for transferring information about pupils from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. If standards at Key Stage 3 are to improve, secondary schools need to take careful account of the attainment of pupils at the end of Year 6 as a matter of urgency and build on what primary schools know their pupils can do. Further, the results at Key Stage 3 in 2001 show that girls have a 17 percentage points lead over boys in English (compared to only two percentage points in mathematics and none in science). This report shows very clearly that boys' under-achievement and poor response begin early.

209 Since the introduction of the strategy, the vast majority of teachers and headteachers have worked assiduously to reform the teaching of English and they have been rewarded, until this year, by a steady improvement in standards. Although this year's results may seem disappointing, the improvements in writing at Key Stage 2 and in spelling at Key Stage 1 should not be underestimated. They show clearly that building teachers' capacity to teach writing can make a difference. The challenge now, for policy-makers, LEAs and schools, is to secure further improvements in reading as well as writing at both key stages which will, in turn, have an impact upon standards of English as a whole.

Executive Summary of the Technical Report (Literacy)

210 In 1999 the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) was asked to organise a yearly testing programme to support the evaluation of the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) being undertaken by OFSTED. The testing programme was commissioned by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), as was the development of specially designed sets of tests in English for use in the programme. By summer 2001, the testing programme had been administered in three successive years. This summary therefore draws on data collected from the end of the first year of the National Literacy Strategy to the end of its third year of implementation.

211 The aim of the testing programme was to provide a more detailed picture of changes in standards and progress over time than would be available from the published annual data from the national tests at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2. Testing focussed on pupils within Key Stage 2. QCA commissioned a suite of tests, similar in structure, content and outcome to the existing published optional tests for Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils, but limited to use within the evaluation of the National Literacy Strategy. Separate elements of the tests assessed reading, writing and spelling. For reading and spelling, age-standardised scores could be calculated and for each of the three elements pupils can be awarded a national curriculum level.

212 OFSTED identified a representative sample of 300 schools to take part in the evaluation. These schools were originally required to participate for three years and to give the English tests to all their Year 3, 4 and 5 pupils each summer. Tests were despatched and administered under secure conditions and completed tests were returned to NFER for marking. Schools were also asked to provide some background information about their pupils to inform the analysis. Test marks and background data were used to assemble a database each year and numbering strategies were devised so that individual pupils taking part on more than one occasion could be tracked. Schools received scores and national curriculum levels for each of their pupils and summary information in the form of simple charts and tables for their school as a whole.

213 In 1999, 283 schools contributed to the national analysis of test data. The project has received good support from the sample schools and in 2001, 271 schools had maintained their involvement. (Only 269 of these provided scripts in time for inclusion in the analysis.) Substantial numbers of pupils are therefore included in the database (an average of around 10,500 for each year group) and the majority of these have taken part in testing on more than one occasion. In comparison to the school population as a whole, the selected sample is broadly representative in terms of size and type of school and geographical location. However, there is a small under-representation of lower achieving schools in terms of Key Stage 2 results prior to the start of the testing programme, and this has been taken into account when carrying out the statistical analysis.

214 A range of analysis strategies was used in 2001. At the most basic level, it was possible to compare the performance of whole year groups in 1999, 2000 and 2001 to look for changes in average age-standardised scores over time. In all age groups, there has been significant improvement in average scores from summer 1999 to summer 2001. The increases measured in 2001 were greater than those measured in 2000. The evaluation tests were not available to measure progress during the first year of implementation of the National Literacy Strategy, but evidence from the second and third years suggest that there have been consistent gradual improvements in scores in all three year groups and across the ability range.

215 These improvements have been reflected in a corresponding upward shift in the distribution of national curriculum levels. For example, in 1999 43% of Year 5 pupils achieved national

curriculum level 4 or better in reading, but by 2001 the proportion has increased to 47%. At the same time, there was a reduction in the proportion of pupils failing to reach the lowest level measured by the evaluation tests. For Year 5 pupils there was a reduction of three percentage points (from 22% to 19%) in those working below level 3.

216 When comparing national curriculum levels achieved in reading and writing in each of the three year groups tested, it is obvious that pupils' performance in reading is much better than their performance in writing. For example, in 1999 78% of pupils in Year 5 achieved level 3 or better in reading but only 59% achieved level 3 or better in writing. By 2001, there had been an increase of three percentage points in the proportion of pupils achieving level 3 or better in reading, and the corresponding increase for writing was 13 percentage points. While the gap between performance in reading and writing remains, there is evidence that improvements in writing are closing the gap.

217 Since most pupils were tested on more than one occasion between 1999 and 2001, it was also possible to analyse progress made year on year by these pupils. Simple comparison of changes in average age-standardised scores and national curriculum levels for pupils were supplemented by the use of powerful multilevel statistical models. Such techniques allow complex data sets, where many variable factors may affect a particular outcome (in this case, age-standardised scores for reading and spelling and writing equivalent point score), to be examined. The modelling enables the relationship between each individual factor to be measured independently of all the others in the dataset and the strength of the relationship between each factor and the outcome to be determined. It is very important to remember that age-standardised scores take into account improvements that are expected as a result of increasing maturity. Thus, a child of average ability in Year 4 might have an age-standardised score of 99 and would be expected to have an age-standardised score of approximately 99 in Year 5. Any change in age-standardised score over time implies greater than expected change in the knowledge, skills and achievement measured by the tests.

218 The large amount of test data gathered during the course of the evaluation has made it possible to map how children progress throughout the four years of Key Stage 2. Most schools have provided NFER with both prior attainment data in reading, writing and spelling for the end of Key Stage 1 assessments as well as Key Stage 2 results for 2000 and 2001 for their pupils who were in Year 5 in 1999 and 2000. Comparing three different types of assessment (Key Stage 1, evaluation tests and Key Stage 2) has some inherent difficulties in terms of variation in test structure and outcome but, despite these, some useful observations can be made. Over the last three years, it has been obvious that there has been an overall shift in patterns of attainment, not just in relation to the evaluation tests, but also in the profile of achievement at the end of Key Stage 1. The proportion of pupils coming into Year 3 assessed as level 1 or 'Working towards' level 1 in reading and writing has been decreasing over time. In 1999 17% of pupils in the sample had not attained level 2 in writing at the end of Key Stage 1, but by 2001 this proportion had dropped to 13%.

219 Monitoring the progress of children in the sample schools over time has shown that progress in reading, writing and spelling appears to be slower in the first two years of Key Stage 2 than in the second two years. In particular, many pupils make substantial progress during Year 6. For example, within the lowest-achieving group of pupils in Year 5 (those assessed as below level 3), 40% go on to achieve level 4 or better in reading, and 24% achieved level 4 or better in writing by the end of Key Stage 2. Further investigation showed that the pupils who make this marked improvement are more likely to be boys and to be among the youngest pupils in the year group ('summer born' children).

220 Both traditional statistical analyses and multilevel modelling have demonstrated a relationship between a number of background factors and scores in the tests. The most powerful relationship is between prior

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attainment (measured as level achieved at Key Stage 1) and age-standardised scores in each of the three year groups tested. Children who have performed well at Key Stage 1 are very likely to have a higher score in subsequent years. Allowing for prior attainment, girls in all age groups tend to have higher scores than boys. Fluent users of English have higher scores in reading, writing and spelling and, taking into account all other factors, pupils from Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups are more likely to have higher scores in writing and spelling than pupils in other ethnic groups. These effects were observed in all three rounds of testing. Some background factors were consistently associated with lower scores. Children eligible for free school meals and those with identified special needs were generally likely to have lower scores after allowing for differences in prior attainment.

221 The models used made it possible to see if the progress made by pupils in the sample schools varied according to any of the background factors. In 2000, boys and girls made equivalent progress in writing and spelling but girls made more progress than boys in reading. Between 2000 and 2001 boys and girls in Year 4 had made comparable progress in reading, writing and spelling. Girls in Year 5 had made more progress than boys in writing, but for reading and spelling, their progress was comparable. While both boys and girls are obtaining better scores in 2001 than in 1999, there is no real evidence that the gap in achievement between girls and boys is closing. Lower achieving pupils at Key Stage 1 had made more progress in 2001 than pupils with average or above average levels. Pupils eligible for free school meals and with identified SEN made comparable progress in all test elements to other pupils, except in Year 4 writing where SEN pupils made better progress than pupils with no SEN.

222 In 2001 pupils who had achieved lower levels at Key Stage 1 had made relatively more progress than higher achieving pupils by the time they took the evaluation tests. This suggests that the gap between lower and higher achievers was narrowing during Key Stage 2. From Year 4 to Year 5 in 2001, boys and girls made progress to the same extent but between Year 3 and Year 4, girls made relatively less progress. Pupils eligible for free school meals were likely to make less progress than those pupils who were not eligible. Similarly, pupils with identified SEN made less progress between Year 3 and Year 4 but made equivalent progress compared with pupils with no SEN between Year 4 and Year 5. However, pupils at all stages of learning English made progress to the same extent. Summer-born pupils appeared to progress more slowly between Years 3 and 5 than those born in spring and autumn.

223 Some school-level factors were included in the model to investigate their relationship with attainment and progress. Generally, pupil-level factors tend to have stronger relationships with scores and progress, but some school-factors were found to be significant. Pupils in schools in metropolitan areas had made more progress in reading and writing, but their reading scores were still generally lower than pupils from schools in non-metropolitan areas. Relatively better writing scores were achieved by pupils in junior schools than their counterparts in primary schools. High grades from OFSTED section 10 inspections for the effective use of curricular targets and the leadership offered by the school's SEN co-ordinator were associated with better progress during Year 4.

224 The findings from the testing programme from the last three years have shown significant improvements in performance in reading, writing and spelling within the sample group of pupils. Average age-standardised scores have increased, over and above what would be expected and there has been an upward shift in national curriculum levels in Years 3, 4 and 5 as measured by the tests. The trend for gradual improvements at all ability levels and in each of the age groups has continued. Improvements in writing were better between 2000 and 2001 than between 1999 and 2000. These findings alone cannot assess the impact of the National Literacy Strategy, but they do provide sound statistical evidence of changes in patterns of achievement for all groups of pupils during the second and third years of the National Literacy Strategy.

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